



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Final

PURPOSE

The purpose of the economic development element is to focus attention and effort on the need to provide an appropriate balance between residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, timber, and open space land uses. The appropriate balance will allow the county to provide the necessary and desirable service while maintaining a desired quality of life.

Amador County's economic development objectives include:

- Promote a positive corporate identity that positions the County as a business friendly community with a superior quality of life;
- Create employment opportunities suited to the local workforce;
- Expand and diversify the tax base;
- Support small business development, expansion and retention;
- Attract new businesses and investment that meets social, environmental and economic objectives; and
- Pursue necessary resources, including water, to allow continued economic growth.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Economic Development Element includes the following sections:

- **Economic Conditions and Trends.** This section includes a description of the County's economic foundation, employment characteristics, and targets for future growth.
- **Agricultural conditions.** This section includes description of the County's agricultural production and the County's different agricultural areas.
- **Economic Agencies and Programs.** This section includes a description of the County's economic development "infrastructure."
- **Economic Strategies.** This section includes a description of the County's broad economic development goals of providing incentives, improving education, and building tourism.



- **Agricultural Strategies,** This section discusses the use of new agricultural activities to maintain the economic viability of the agricultural industry.
- **Issues, Goals and Policies.** This section identifies economic development issues in Amador County, and describes the goals and policies developed to address these issues.

The Economic Development Element provides policy direction ensuring economic prosperity in all industries, but places particular focus on agriculture as a continuing viable industry, and allows all residents to enjoy the quality of life Amador County provides.

The Element provides a brief overview of existing conditions to provide context for the goals and policies. The information presented in this chapter includes the composition of the local economy. Unless otherwise noted, the references and statistics quoted in this section originate from the Local Economy Background Working Paper and the Agriculture Working Paper prepared to support the General Plan update.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) has established guidelines for the content of general plans in California. Economic development is not a required element of a general plan; however, OPR provides guidance on potential issues of focus for economic development should a county choose to address this topic in its general plan. Among the issues suggested by OPR are business development and retention by sector, employment development, and business recruitment. Economic goals and policies contained in this Element are intended to support the General Plan vision and move the County closer to its desired economic future. The economic strategy contained in this chapter is based on an understanding of the current historical trends and existing conditions in Amador County.

Economic development describes the actions that can be taken by the County and agencies such as the Amador Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) to promote or support job- and revenue-generating uses. These actions may include, but are not necessarily limited to: land use decisions that ensure an adequate amount of land is available for commercial and industrial uses; incentives or support activities to attract and retain businesses, including financial incentives or technical assistance; actions designed to affect the economic environment of the County, including support for education, child care, and job training; and efforts to maintain or increase the quality of life in the County, which have the effect of increasing its desirability for potential businesses and residents. The County's economic development activities will be most



effective when they are targeted to take advantage of Amador County's unique characteristics, including its natural, mineral, and scenic resources.

Large areas of Amador County are in agricultural use, and many of the County's economic development issues directly relate to agricultural practices, businesses, and industries. Many issues identified during the preparation of the General Plan were associated with agricultural land use. This chapter also includes goals and policies related to encouraging and expanding economically viable agricultural activities in the County. Agricultural land use and conservation issues are addressed in the Land Use and Conservation Elements of the General Plan.

ECONOMIC ATTRACTORS, CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Given the changing nature of the economy, it is important to understand the conditions providing the foundation for the County's economic development goals and policies. These conditions affect future decision-making related to land use and economic development. Many factors in the local economy can vary from year to year. The following descriptions provide current snapshots of trends in Amador County related to the local economy, including employment and the labor force, and also provide brief summaries of Amador County's unique economic attractors.

Economic Attractors

In addition to Amador County's economic statistics, including employment, education, and labor force information, the economic development strategy for the County must take into account those conditions and resources—*attractors*—which are unique or special about Amador County. Amador County's location is a prime attractor for the thousands of individual entrepreneurs who have chosen a rural Amador County lifestyle, sustaining small businesses in our communities and within their homes. Amador County's proximity to the Sacramento and Stockton metropolitan areas offers businesses an opportunity to market to sizeable population bases.

The judicious use of Amador County's mineral, agricultural, and timber resources are key elements of the County's economy. Historic towns, buildings, and sites offer recreational opportunities and attract visitors from inside and outside the County. The County's natural resources, including rivers, lakes, and scenic beauty also offer opportunities to draw visitors. Artistic and cultural resources, including performing arts, are also important assets. Amador County's high quality of life and sense of community have the potential to attract visitors, businesses, and new residents to the County.



Employment

Employment Sectors

In 2006, the largest employment sector in Amador County was retail trade, followed by health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services. Earlier employment trends show retail trade has been the County's largest employment sector since as early as 1990, followed closely by the manufacturing industry; however, since that time, the manufacturing employment sector has seen an employment decline of approximately 25 percent (see **Table E-1**). The retail trade sector added 787 new jobs between 1990 and 2006 (see **Figure E-1**), while the health care and social assistance sector added 383 new jobs. Other sectors showing significant numbers of new jobs between 1990 and 2006 include construction (246 new jobs), accommodation and food services (202 new jobs), professional and technical services (190 new jobs), and information technology (59 jobs).

One industry poised to experience economic growth—which could translate into employment opportunities—is the tourism industry. The County has recognized this industry as an opportunity area that could improve its economic circumstances and provide additional jobs for residents. This General Plan includes several policies intended to expand and encourage this type of economic development in the long term.

Labor Force

Between 1990 and 2005, Amador County saw a 50 percent increase in its labor force, from 11,500 to more than 17,000 (see **Figure E-2**). More recently, the growth rate of the labor force slowed to about 1.59 percent annually between 2001 and 2005.

The gradual slowing in the growth of the labor force has led to increasing dependence on tourist-serving industries. The slowing growth in Amador County's labor force is likely related to broader population trends in the county; the number of county residents between the ages of 18 and 24 declined between 1990 and 2000, and this demographic group typically replaces the people retiring from the labor force. This decline in younger residents entering the labor force may reflect an absence of appropriate jobs in the County for these residents.



**Table E-1
Amador County Employment Trends (1990–2006)**

NAICS	Industry Title	Employment			Percent Change (1990–2006)	
		1990	2000	2006	Total	Annual
11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	139	247	343	147%	5.8%
21	Mining	42	40	160	281%	8.7%
22	Utilities	75	80	73	-3%	-0.2%
23	Construction	367	356	613	67%	3.3%
31	Manufacturing	1,011	760	754	-25%	-1.8%
42	Wholesale trade	212	224	101	-52%	-4.5%
44	Retail Trade	1,017	1,558	1,804	77%	3.6%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	204	61	53	-74%	-8.1%
51	Information	155	161	214	38%	2.0%
52	Finance and insurance	290	296	279	-4%	-0.2%
53	Real estate and rental and leasing	78	83	81	4%	0.2%
54	Professional and technical services	130	272	320	146%	5.8%
55	Management of companies and enterprises	4	27	30	650%	13.4%
56	Administrative and waste services	171	856	150	-12%	-0.8%
61	Educational services	37	11	11	-70%	-7.3%
62	Health care and social assistance	967	1120	1,319	36%	2.0%
71	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	98	102	151	54%	2.7%
72	Accommodation and food services	746	758	948	27%	1.5%
81	Other services, except public administration	265	272	225	-15%	-1.0%
Total		6,008	7,284	7,629	27%	1.5%

Note: NAICS – North American Industry Classification System

Source: ADE based on California Employment Development Department (EDD) - Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

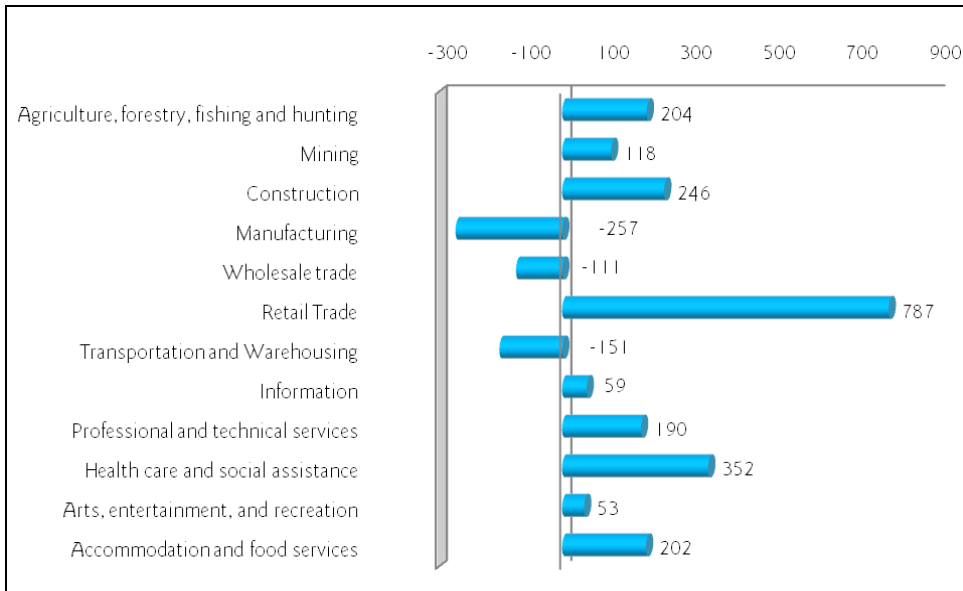
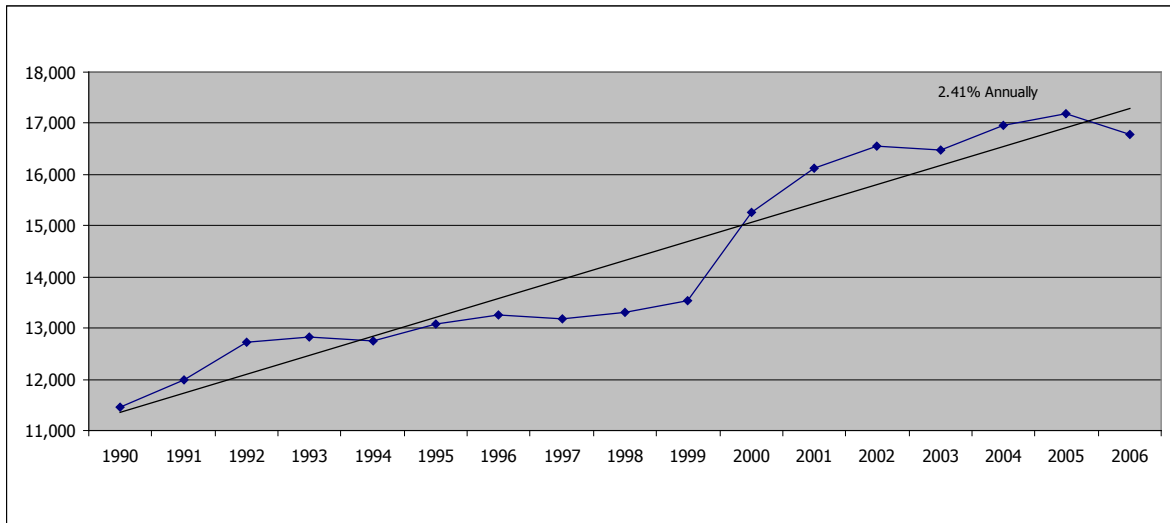


Figure E-1 Net Change in Jobs by Sector, 1990–2006



Source: ADE 2008, Based on California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division

Figure E-2 Growth in Amador County Labor Force



Education

Educational attainment is an important factor in considering economic development strategies, especially with regard to attracting jobs to an area. For example, an area with a population characterized by low levels of educational attainment would not attract businesses and employers that require employees with high levels of education; these jobs tend to be higher paying jobs than those which can be filled by people with lower levels of education.

Increasing the population of highly-educated and skilled people is an important element in an economic strategy to attract high-paying jobs. In 2000, high school graduates made up 30.4 percent of the population over 25 years of age, with an additional 30 percent of the population having some college education. Approximately 24 percent of the population had four or more years of college education, while the population with lower education attainment levels was smaller; people with less than a high school education made up about 15 percent of the population. These statistics represent a shift towards more County residents with higher levels of education compared to 1990 figures (see **Table E-2**). Vocational training, though hard to quantify based on Census data, should also be an important component of the County’s education strategy, as many jobs which require a high school diploma and specialized training or apprenticeship offer higher incomes than jobs requiring college education.

**Table E-2
Educational Attainment of Population 25 and Older (1990–2000)**

Highest Level of Education Attained	1990	2000	% Change (1990–2000)
Elementary School	1,185	259	-78%
Some High School	2,431	3,657	50%
High school graduate	7,537	7,721	2%
Some college	6,593	7,609	15%
Four Years of College or More	2,886	6,123	112%

Source: ADE 2008, based on U.S. Census

Despite higher levels of education among the population aged 25 and over, the number of residents who did not complete high school doubled between 1995 and 2005, with levels reaching as high as 11 percent in 2003. This rate dropped only slightly between 2003 and 2005. At the same time, the County experienced a decreasing trend in the number of high school graduates who met the University of California/California State University entrance requirements: in 1995, 26.5 percent met the criteria, while in 2005 only 22.6 percent met the criteria.



Trends for Future Employment

Targeted Sectors and Industries

Agricultural, retail, and services employment has been expanding at a faster pace in Amador County than the rest of the state for more than a decade (1992 to 2004). With the County's wine grape growing industry continuing to grow, it is likely the expansion of agricultural industry will continue. In addition, as the County's population continues to expand, so too will its demand for services and retail. The General Plan focuses regional commercial and retail activity in Martell, but also encourages development of community retail and services at three rural Town Centers, located in Buckhorn, Pine Grove, and River Pines. These expanded commercial centers may result in an increased number of jobs in those industries. The AEDC anticipates the fastest growing industry in the County will be personal services until approximately 2020, followed by public services and retail trade.

In addition to attracting and expanding commercial and industrial businesses, the County's economic development strategy includes components directed to the agricultural industry, with a particular focus on tourism, agri-tourism and agriculture-supporting businesses. Approximately one-fourth of the County's employment in 2004 was dependent on visitors to the County and the direct spending they generated. Agri-tourism could include hospitality services, such as bed-and-breakfasts, farm stays, farm tours, winery tours, education, entertainment, and outfitter services. In addition to agricultural attractors, historic resources, scenic beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, and tribal gaming offer continued opportunities to boost tourism. By attracting tourists, Amador County will also increase demand for service and retail industry jobs supporting these visitors.

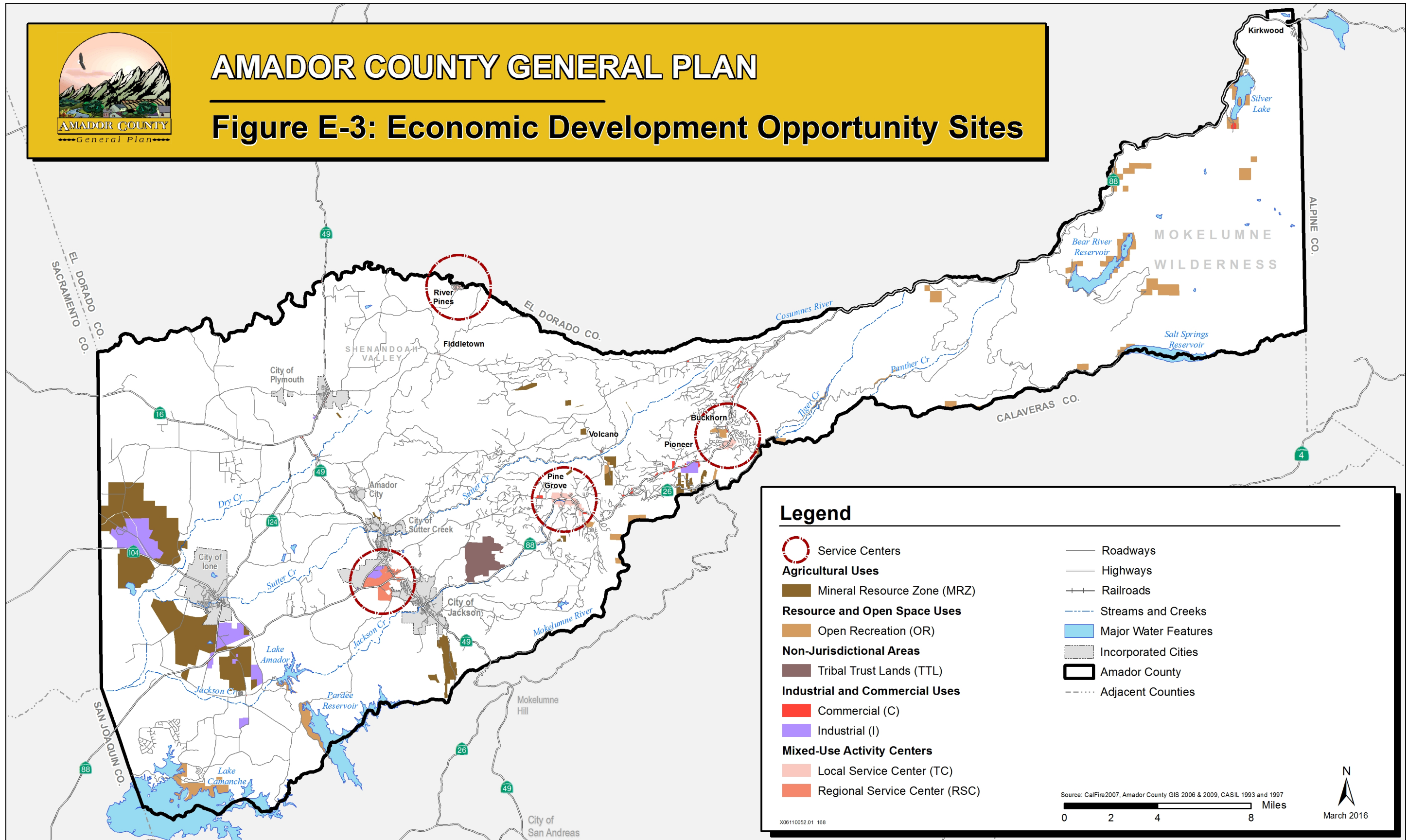
Opportunity Sites for Job-Generating Uses

The General Plan includes mixed-use Town Centers in Buckhorn, Pine Grove, and River Pines, and a mixed-use Regional Service Center (RSC) in Martell (See **Figure E-3**). These centers support intensified residential, commercial, public, and industrial uses in development patterns similar to those historically present in rural communities. These areas represent the County's largest opportunity areas for the development of major commercial and industrial space that could potentially provide new economic opportunities for new and expanded businesses as well as jobs.



AMADOR COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Figure E-3: Economic Development Opportunity Sites



Legend

Service Centers	Roadways
Agricultural Uses	Highways
Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ)	Railroads
Resource and Open Space Uses	Streams and Creeks
Open Recreation (OR)	Major Water Features
Non-Jurisdictional Areas	Incorporated Cities
Tribal Trust Lands (TTL)	Amador County
Industrial and Commercial Uses	Adjacent Counties
Commercial (C)	
Industrial (I)	
Mixed-Use Activity Centers	
Local Service Center (TC)	
Regional Service Center (RSC)	

Source: CalFire 2007, Amador County GIS 2006 & 2009, CASIL 1993 and 1997

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March 2016



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Each Town Center serves the immediately surrounding areas and travelers with uses such as grocery stores, hardware stores, local offices, and health care providers, in addition to encouraging housing that reduces the need for residents to drive long distances for basic goods and services. The Martell Regional Service Center, on the other hand, features a higher residential density and intensity of non-residential uses, and is intended to serve people from the entire County, as well as people from other counties and travelers. The Town Center and Regional Service Center locations represent the primary opportunity sites within the County for new job-generating commercial, service, or office development, offering sites for many new businesses to locate in the County. Industrial development would be appropriate in Martell in addition to other commercial and industrial sites located throughout the County, with only limited industrial uses possible in Town Centers. Additional rural industrial locations are designated for those industrial uses which are not compatible with residential or sensitive uses.

Please refer to the Land Use Element for additional information on the proposed mix of commercial, industrial, and residential uses and business types appropriate in each Town Center and RSC.

Historic resources such as the County's gold-rush-era towns and buildings, cultural and artistic offerings, vineyards and agricultural lands, and other natural resource areas all offer valuable opportunities to enjoy the County's scenic beauty and outdoor activities. Given the importance and anticipated growth of tourism and visitor services within the County's economy, the County's economic development activities should include preservation and enhancement of resource areas attractive to visitors as a high priority.

AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS

Agriculture is an important component of Amador County's economy, as well as the County's character. Protection of the County's agricultural resources will remain a vital concern for County residents through the year 2030 and beyond.

Agricultural Production

The crop reports prepared by the Amador County Agriculture Department break down the County's crop and livestock values into six categories: fruit and nut crops; field crops; livestock and poultry; livestock and poultry products; miscellaneous; and timber and related products. In 2009, the fruit and nut crops category brought in the highest values, with \$11,582,232 overall; \$11,413,952 of which came from wine grape production alone.



The livestock and poultry category brought in \$6,124,698 in 2009. Cattle and calves brought in about 89 percent of the total value of livestock and poultry.

Field crops, including hay and alfalfa; hay and grain; hay, other; irrigated pasture; pasture and range; and miscellaneous (including Sudan Grass and corn) had a total value of \$3,472,688, led by the pasture and range subcategory. The timber and related products category had a value of \$438,921 (substantially lower than other recent years); other miscellaneous crops and agricultural products had values of about \$1.1 million in 2009.

Table E-3 illustrates the acreage in use for various agricultural crops and products, as described in the County’s 2009 Crop Report.

**Table E-3
Amador County Agricultural Acreage**

Agricultural Product	2009 Acreage
Wine Grapes	3,410
Walnuts	294
Misc. Fruits and Nuts	11
Hay (including alfalfa, grain)	1,940
Irrigated Pasture	1,700
Pasture and Range	156,801
Misc. Field Crops	328
Total:	164,484

Note: Acreages rounded to the nearest whole acre.

Source: Amador County 2009

Major Agricultural Areas

The Land Use Element includes descriptions of the General Plan land use designations for agriculture. These designations are intended to support agricultural use, defining minimum lot sizes for various types of agricultural activities. Agriculture in Amador County occurs in numerous geographic areas with distinct soil resources and economic characteristics. The following two primary types of agricultural landscapes are found in Amador County:

- ✓ **Rangeland** – Rangeland makes up significant portions of the County, including areas not suitable for farming because of slope, soil, or water availability. Pastures here provide excellent weight gains for livestock.



These lands also provide the open space and natural vistas which attract tourism to the County. Significant development pressure exists in Amador County's rangeland areas, especially in locations near cities or unincorporated rural communities.

- ✓ Timberland – Timberland in Amador County is located above approximately 3,500 feet elevation, and includes both privately- and publicly-owned softwood forests. Many of the larger land holdings are located in Timber Production Zones (TPZs), however development pressure exists on other timber lands. At lower elevations between 2,000 feet and 3,500 feet, Amador County's softwood forests have been largely converted to rural residential uses.

Within these landscapes, as many as eight major agricultural resource areas exist. The location of each agricultural landscape and agricultural resource area is identified in **Figure E-4**. Following are descriptions of each agricultural resource area.

Willow Springs Area

The Willow Springs area follows Willow Creek along State Route (SR) 16 in the northwest part of the County. It includes an area west of Plymouth that follows Indian Creek. Both of these areas have hay and pasture with late season creeks to provide green pasture for cattle and sheep production with some irrigated and some sub-irrigated pastures and vineyards. Development pressure exists, as a significant portion of this area has been carved into smaller residential parcels. Much of the land in this area is under Williamson Act contracts.

lone Valley

This area is located south and west of the City of lone and generally follows Dry Creek and Sutter Creek. Water is provided from creeks or wells. The lone Valley is the only area other than Jackson Valley within foothill counties that has class I soil. Crops grown in the area include orchards, vines, berries, row crops, hay, grain, livestock pasture, and Christmas trees. Development pressure in this area is strong, and Mule Creek State Prison is also located in this valley. Much of the land is under Williamson Act contracts.

Jackson Valley

Jackson Valley is located in the southwestern portion of the County and follows Jackson Creek as it leaves Lake Amador. This area features the only irrigation district in the County with water delivered to some parcels under pressure at a reasonable cost. The Jackson Valley is the only area other than lone Valley within foothill counties that has class I soil. This



means any climatically-suited crop can be grown here. Crops grown in the area include orchards, vines, row crops, hay, grain and livestock pasture. Wineries are also located in this area. This area is beginning to experience Development pressure. Much of the land is under Williamson Act contracts.

Shenandoah Valley

The largest and best known farming area in Amador County is the Shenandoah Valley, an area of gently rolling hills set in a high valley above Plymouth. Soils are deep, and easily support grapes, walnuts, prunes, hay, flowers and livestock. Fields are either dry farmed or drip irrigated with well water. Most local wineries are located in this area and as such, they attract most of the County's agricultural tourists. Most of the land is under Williamson Act contracts.

Fiddletown Area

Adjacent to Shenandoah Valley, the Fiddletown area sits between 1,500 and 2,500 feet elevation. Crops grown in the area include grapes, nuts, fruits and vegetables. Livestock is also raised in the Fiddletown area. Both dry farming and drip irrigation using well water occur. Some of the land is under Williamson Act contracts.

Ridge Road Area

The Ridge Road area is located above Sutter Creek between SR 49 and New York Ranch Road following Ridge Road. Water for this area is served by the Amador Water Agency and wells. This area's moderately deep soils support grapes and wineries. Crops grown in this area include orchards, vines and pasture. Some of the land is under Williamson Act contracts.

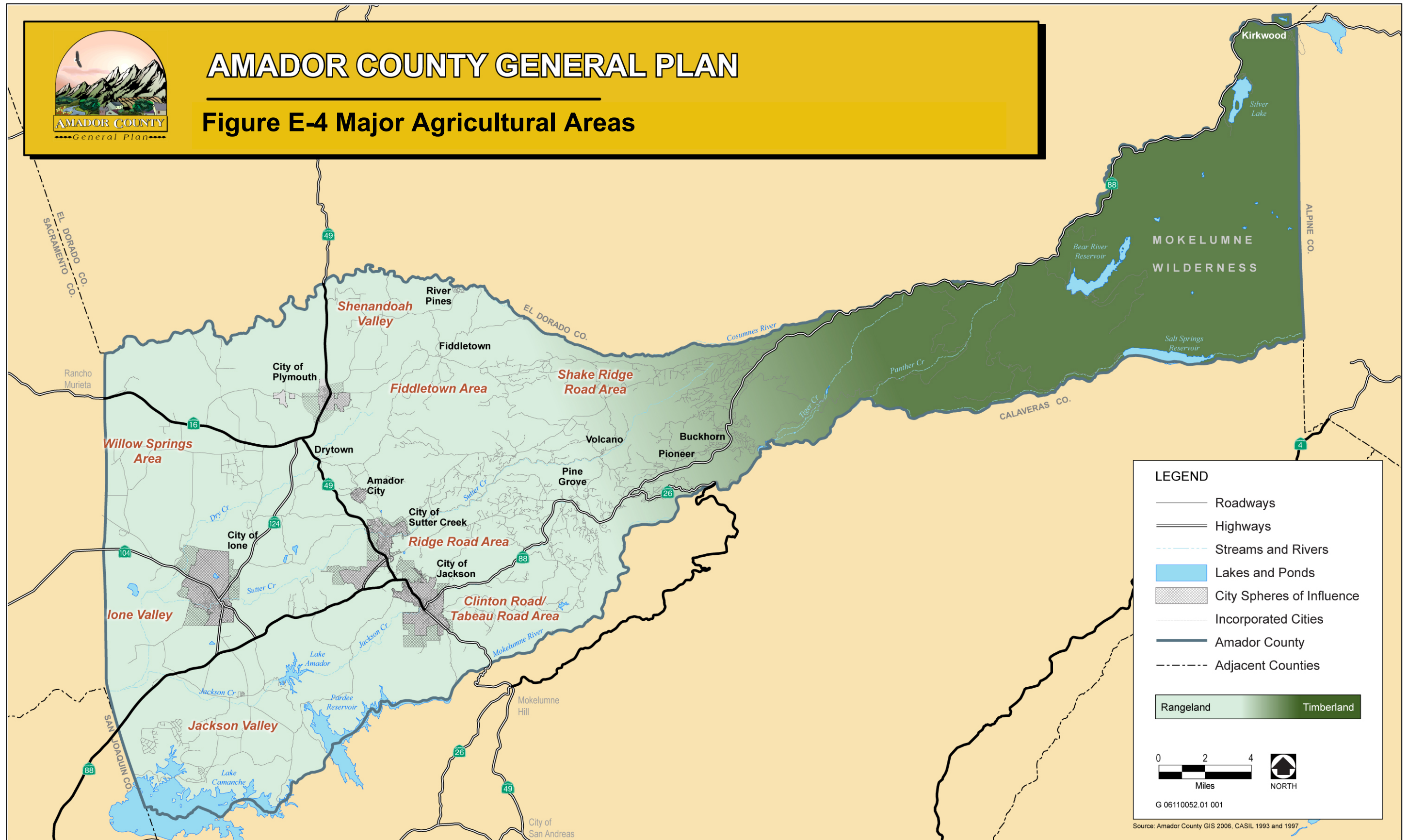
Clinton Road/Tabeau Road Area

This agricultural area is located east of Jackson along the south fork of Jackson Creek between SR 88 and the Mokelumne River. The area receives water from the Amador canal, the south fork of Jackson Creek and numerous groundwater wells. Agricultural commodities grown in this area include orchards, vines, floriculture, fruits and vegetables, and livestock pasture. Development pressure exists, as a significant portion of the area has been subdivided into smaller residential parcels. Some of the land is under Williamson Act contracts.



AMADOR COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Figure E-4 Major Agricultural Areas



LEGEND

- Roadways
- == Highways
- Streams and Rivers
- Lakes and Ponds
- ▨ City Spheres of Influence
- Incorporated Cities
- Amador County
- - - - Adjacent Counties

Rangeland Timberland

0 2 4
Miles

NORTH

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Source: Amador County GIS 2006, CASIL 1993 and 1997



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Shake Ridge Road Area

The Shake Ridge Road Area is located along Shake Ridge Road at elevations ranging from 1,200 to 3,000 feet. Crops include orchards, vines, floriculture, timber, hay and range. Development pressure exists, as a significant portion of the area has been subdivided into smaller residential parcels. Some of the land is under Williamson Act contracts.

ECONOMIC AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS

Amador Economic Development Corporation

The Amador Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) was formed in 1979 to promote business in Amador County. The organization's goals are to provide a source of capital for small businesses, to promote workforce development, to attract new businesses to the County, to encourage infrastructure improvements, and to advocate the siting of a community college in Amador County. The AEDC identifies its primary focus as "to advocate prudent and balanced economic growth; growth that is innovative, resilient and diverse; growth that occurs for the combined advantage of the private sector, the business community, the environment and developers."

In addition to these goals and focus, the AEDC offers assistance to small businesses with financial planning; expansion; business research; marketing, including international trade; a business library with materials of interest to small businesses; seminars and workshops; and a mystery shopper program to assist small businesses in improving their services and business. The AEDC also operates an outreach center where small business owners and people interested in economic development in Amador County can obtain information and apply for assistance.

Amador County Farm Bureau

The Amador County Farm Bureau is the local component of the California Farm Bureau Federation, which is a voluntary, non-profit, and non-governmental corporation with the interest of protecting and promoting agricultural interests throughout California.

Amador County Agriculture Department

The Amador County Agriculture Department serves as the County's local authority to enforce the regulations and requirements set in place by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Department of Pesticide



Regulation, and Structural Pest Control Board. The Department also administers several programs, including: the Pest Exclusion, Pest Detection, Pest Eradication, Pest Management, Pesticide Use Enforcement, Seed Certification, Nursery Inspection, Fruit, Nut and Vegetable Standardization, Egg Inspection, and Crop Statistics programs. The Crop Statistics Program is required under the California Food and Agriculture Code to compile records and prepare the County's annual crop report, which reports on the gross production and value of the County's agricultural commodities.

Amador County Chamber of Commerce

The Amador County Chamber of Commerce is an association of businesses and organizations which works to advance commercial interests in Amador County. The Chamber's interest is generally focused on economic, commercial, tourism, and recreational issues. Promoting tourism in Amador County, and marketing the County and its businesses, are major activities of the Chamber.

University of California Cooperative Extension

The Amador County Cooperative Extension of the University of California provides information, resources, and professional advice to the County's farmers on topics ranging from viticulture to livestock and range management to natural resources and environmental quality. The Extension also sponsors the Farms of Amador, a countywide program for marketing agricultural produce.

Amador Learning Center

Amador County is not located within a California community college district, although Cosumnes River College, part of the Los Rios Community College District in Sacramento, operates the Amador Learning Center in Sutter Creek, providing Amador County residents with some access to community college education opportunities.

Amador County Wine Grape Growers Association

The Amador County Wine Grape Growers Association works to promote Amador County wine grapes to grape buyers. To support this mission, the Association advertises to grape buyers, provides information and education to members, and supports research in viticulture applicable to Amador County.



Other Related Agencies

Amador County is also served by a range of other associations and non-profit organizations which contribute to the County's economic health in various ways. These groups serve as advocates, and take action based on the interests of their members. Examples of these groups include the California Cattlemen's Association, the Amador Vintners Association, the Amador Council of Tourism, and the Central Sierra Mining Association. A successful economic development program for the County will include these and other groups in planning and execution efforts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Maintaining the economic health of the community is vital to maintaining and improving Amador County's quality of life. Economic conditions are expected to change and develop over the life of the plan, and continuing evaluation of economic activities and successes will lead to shifts in the strategy over time. This section describes the County's strategies for economic development. These strategies will be carried out through goals and policies which follow later in this Element.

Provide Economic and Development Incentives

The County will continue to work with economic development entities, and will designate a lead economic development entity to identify specific ways to maintain a favorable business environment for new and existing businesses. These efforts will include continued assistance to new and existing businesses that contribute to the County's culture of small business, including information on economic incentives and assistance to small businesses with research and marketing.

In addition, the County will collaborate with the lead economic development entity to attract new businesses, especially those capable of providing higher-wage jobs to County residents. New business attraction efforts include:

- providing attractive and affordable areas to support development of commercial and industrial businesses (such as the Town Centers and Martell Regional Service Center);
- focusing on attracting key industries that will play a significant role in improving the County's economic future,
- providing economic incentives and assistance for relocating businesses to Amador County;

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- improving services for businesses; and
- marketing the County's positive business environment and high quality of life for employees.

Promote Higher and Continuing Education

Amador County will seek to attract and expand high-paying industries and jobs. Education levels in the County are on the rise, but with the lack of jobs requiring higher levels of education, County residents lack local incentives to pursue higher education, and educated residents may be forced to leave the County for higher-paying jobs. In addition to the lack of higher-paying jobs, Amador County's only post-high school education opportunity is the Amador Learning Center, which is operated in conjunction with Cosumnes River College.

The County will seek to attract additional higher education institutions—such as community colleges or vocational schools—to provide residents with the opportunity to attend college and increase the education attainment level for County residents. In addition, expansion of the Amador Learning Center would aid in promoting higher education opportunities for County residents. Continuing education and university extension programs can also be an important element of this strategy. Such programs offer opportunities to hone specialized skills, and also opportunities for seniors or others interested in broadening their general knowledge or embarking on new career paths. Increasing the percentage of the population with college-level education is an important element of the County's strategy to attract businesses that provide higher-paying jobs, improving the overall economic health of the community.

Promote Tourism

Tourism is an important element in the County's economy, and the continued strength of this sector will help to build the County's economic health. Linking existing tourist attractors, including historic sites, agri-tourism areas, scenic areas, and recreation sites, is an important part of this strategy. These linkages might include marketing efforts to broaden the types of activities pursued by tourists, and also to broaden the range of visitors to Amador County. Visitors to the County support a variety of businesses, and individual Amador County tourist experiences can result in the County being considered as a site for the development or expansion of a business.

Amador County draws visitors because of its resources, including historic, agricultural, scenic, habitat, and recreational resources. The responsible stewardship of the County's resources is therefore a key element to the County's economic development strategy.



Maintain Amador County's Rural Lifestyle

Amador County's rural lifestyle, including the quality of Amador County's rural communities, natural beauty, and the historical and cultural resources, are all key draws. Maintaining these qualities is important both for drawing new businesses to the County, and promoting the County's potential for tourism.

In order to support these qualities, the County should continue to support the use and placement of community-building programs and facilities in town centers, including schools, post offices, retail services, child care, higher education, and health care. This support might include consultation with the economic development entities to draw retail businesses or professional services to town centers, encouraging the placement of services, including health care and government services, in town center and rural communities, and coordinating with health care providers to increase the range of services in town centers, perhaps through co-location or shared facilities.

AGRICULTURAL STRATEGIES

Agriculture plays a significant role in the economy of Amador County by providing jobs, business opportunities, and income. It is in the County's best interest to continue to maintain a healthy agricultural economy; therefore, the County has developed several strategies to support continued agricultural activity.

Provide Agricultural Economic and Development Incentives

To progress toward these broad agricultural economic development objectives, General Plan policies lay out an agricultural economic development strategy. Agricultural economic development activities will be guided by producers and landowners in the individual agricultural areas or industries. Each of these groups experiences unique economic conditions which affect their individual goals.

Economic strategies for agriculture aim to generate new agricultural business opportunities, including agricultural tourism and agriculture-supporting businesses such as on-site or local processing and/or sales and distribution. Other strategies include providing support for agricultural businesses, and development of agricultural services to serve local operations.

Marketing or branding of the County's produce and agricultural areas is another way to add value to agricultural products. As the market for local



produce grows, Amador County is in a position to provide locally grown produce to nearby markets throughout the Mother Lode and Sacramento metropolitan area. The General Plan also provides a framework for developing services to support agri-tourism, including restaurants, bed-and-breakfasts, and similar tourist-oriented services.

Agri-tourism

Agri-tourism represents the greatest agricultural economic opportunity for Amador County. With a location near growing communities in Sacramento and beyond, as well as its growing wine industry and scenic rural character, the County is well-positioned to capitalize on agri-tourism as a way to improve its economic viability and benefit from tourism dollars brought into the County by visitors.

The County seeks to support the development of agri-tourism and associated sub-industries like nature tourism, agri-entertainment, and agri-education businesses. These may include outdoor recreation services such as fishing, hunting, gold panning, wildlife study, and horseback riding; educational experiences such as mine tours, cooking classes, and wine tasting; and entertainment associated with agriculture, such as harvest festivals, fairs, and barn dances. Direct agri-tourism services may include hospitality, such as bed-and-breakfasts, farm stays, farm tours, winery tours, and outfitter services. These services provide tourists with incentives to visit and stay in Amador County, as well as providing a full range of local products they can purchase during their visit. A companion strategy for the County's efforts to support these businesses is agricultural land conservation, which is addressed in the Conservation Element of the General Plan.

Generational Succession of Agricultural Lands

A major issue for Amador County agriculture is the lack of incentives for younger generations to continue in the industry. Contributing factors include the lack of agricultural economic opportunities, a movement away from passing down agricultural experience and knowledge to future generations, distribution of property among multiple heirs (reducing the size of agricultural properties), and inheritance taxes which may be triggered when valuable agricultural property is passed from one generation to the next. Often, an agricultural operation can support only one family, leading children to move elsewhere to seek better economic opportunities and build careers in industries other than agriculture. New owners of agricultural properties may lack incentive or experience to keep the lands in agricultural production, so these lands are often vulnerable to sale and/or withdrawal from the Williamson Act.

The Mother Lode Land Trust is a local organization which purchases both land and conservation easements to maintain land in agricultural use. In



addition, California Farmlink and other similar organizations work to connect farmers nearing retirement with those interested in beginning a farming career, linking people through lease, mentoring, and similar arrangements.

ISSUES, GOALS AND POLICIES

Economic Development

A healthy, vibrant economy provides jobs for county residents, and also aids in the continuing fiscal viability of county services. Amador County's economy has historically depended on agricultural, commercial, industrial, mineral, mining, tourism, and forest production activities, and these industries will be important to the County's future, as well.

Economic development goals and policies include efforts to raise the jobs-to-housing ratio for the county and to increase the proportion of non-residential development to support the county's fiscal health. Efforts to provide employment and education opportunities that retain young people in Amador County are also important.

A favorable business environment includes an efficient and consistent regulatory environment, retention and expansion of existing businesses, technical assistance, and support for infrastructure and services needed to support job-generating development. Infrastructure and service needs for commercial and industrial businesses can include water, wastewater, transportation and transit infrastructure, high-speed communications, and basic utilities. Infrastructure improvements and expansion to support future economic development should not be at the expense of existing users.

For the County's economic development activities, it is important to consider the fiscal impacts – both costs and benefits – of economic development efforts, including infrastructure expansion.

Goal E-1: Develop and maintain a favorable business environment in the county.

Policy E-1.1: Encourage an efficient and consistent regulatory environment, including a predictable development process.

Policy E-1.2: Support and collaborate with local economic development organizations to bring new businesses and industry to the county, and to help local businesses develop and expand.



Policy E-1.3: Refer businesses seeking economic development grants, loans, and other funds from state, federal, and private sources to local agencies and organizations that offer technical assistance.

Policy E-1.4: Encourage the retention and expansion of existing businesses within the county.

Policy E-1.5: Support improvement of infrastructure serving commercial and industrial development and agricultural business,

Policy E-1.6: Promote the availability of early care and education facilities at locations which permit the parents of small children to work.

Goal E-2: Improve the availability of communications services to businesses and residents.

Policy E-2.1: Coordinate with utilities and private service providers to encourage the provision of high-speed communications infrastructure and service throughout the county to encourage business development and expansion, and support home-based work.

Goal E-3: Develop educational and training options for county residents.

Policy E-3.1: Encourage the establishment of higher education facilities in the county, including a community college and technical education or trade school facilities.

Policy E-3.2: Work with existing and new businesses located in the county to coordinate training opportunities with existing and planned job requirements.

Goal E-4: Improve the jobs-housing balance and maintain the fiscal health of the county.

Policy E-4.1: Promote development of light industrial, manufacturing, and other commercial businesses to diversify the county's economic base.

Policy E-4.2: Promote a balance of commercial and industrial development to residential development which maintains the fiscal health of the county.

Policy E-4.3: ~~Promote~~ Improve the continued health of Amador County's small businesses.

Policy E-4.4: Focus job development activities on higher wage jobs for the local population and jobs which produce goods or services for export from the region in order to maximize potential benefits.



Policy E-4.5: Support the expansion of industrial activities in Amador County in accordance with the industrial development priorities identified in this Element.

Goal E-5: Promote cultural and economic development of rural communities throughout the county.

Policy E-5.1: Support existing and new programs and facilities which contribute to the cohesion and prosperity of our rural communities, including local schools and shops.

Policy E-5.2: Work to expand the availability of community services and opportunities in the county's rural communities.

Goal E-6: Retain existing and attract new businesses expand our economic base.

Policy E-6.1: Work with community members, business leaders, and local organizations to develop and implement a strategic plan for economic development in Amador County that encourages and attracts private sector investment.

Policy E-6.2: Target key industries which are important to the future of the county for economic development.

Policy E-6.3: Use Amador County's quality of life as an economic development and business attraction tool.

Policy E-6.4: Establish benchmarks to measure the success of local economic development activities.

Tourism

The County will encourage continued expansion of tourism in Amador County. Amador County's tourist draws include agricultural areas and products, scenic and natural beauty, outdoor recreational opportunities, and gold rush history. In addition to providing economic benefits in its own right, increased tourism offers expanded opportunities to showcase the County's rural character and high quality of life.

Goal E-7: Promote and expand tourism opportunities in Amador County.

Policy E-7.1: Partner with local and regional agencies to promote Amador County locally, nationally, and internationally as a tourist destination.

Policy E-7.2: Identify key resources which are current or potential tourist draws, and work to maintain and enhance these resources. Encourage and promote nature tourism and outdoor recreational tourism. Identify key sites, locations, and activities which draw tourists, and develop a strategy to promote and market these resources.



- Policy E-7.3: Encourage agri-tourism which provides an additional source of income to farmers and ranchers.
- Policy E-7.4: Promote development of support businesses and tourism-related services in cities and rural communities near tourist sites, including retail uses such as lodging and restaurants.
- Policy E-7.5: Encourage and promote the County's mining and gold rush history as a tourism resource.
- Policy E-7.6: Promote collaboration between the county, cities, and non-governmental organizations to share resources and plan effectively for tourism.

Economically Viable Agriculture

The County will encourage the continued economic viability of farming ranching, and agricultural business. Agriculture-related businesses and agri-tourism can offer important sources of income for farmers and ranchers. The County will support continued use of agriculture-related businesses, including wine tasting and roadside stands. Provision of adequate water for farming is also a critical need for farmers. Conservation of agricultural land is key to the continued health of Amador County's agricultural economy.

Goal E-8: Preserve the land base necessary to sustain agricultural production and maintain long term economic viability of agricultural land uses.

- Policy E-8.1: Ensure future land uses are appropriately located and scaled to fit in with the county's rural and agricultural context.
- Policy E-8.2: On lands under Williamson Act contracts, provide for and support value-added agricultural activities designed to provide an additional source of farming income while maintaining the land for viable agricultural production, in accordance with state law.
- Policy E-8.3: Provide for and support value-added agricultural activities designed to provide an additional source of farming income while maintaining the land for viable agricultural production.
- Policy E-8.4: Promote development of support businesses associated with agri-tourism.



Goal E-9: Maintain important farmlands for agricultural uses and agri-tourism.

Policy E-9.1: Maintain the right of individuals in Amador County to farm, including enforcement of the County’s “Right to Farm” ordinance.

Policy E-9.2: Encourage use of Williamson Act contracts to maintain farm and ranch lands in agricultural use.

Policy E-9.3: Educate landowners about alternative methods of farmland preservation, including identification of funding for conservation easements.

Policy E-9.4: Direct future development toward “infill” areas (areas of existing urban development), areas contiguous to cities, and areas with infrastructure and services in order to maintain the viability of existing agricultural land.

Policy E-9.5: Review future development for compatibility with existing adjacent and nearby agricultural uses.

Policy E-9.6: Direct future development away from farmlands of local or statewide importance.

Policy E-9.7: Encourage provision of farm family and farm worker housing in a manner that conserves important farmlands.

Policy E-9.8 Encourage the use of site planning techniques such as properly maintained buffers, building envelopes and setbacks on lands adjacent to agricultural uses in order to protect agriculture from encroachment by incompatible land uses.

Goal E-10: Encourage alternative means of providing water to agricultural users.

Policy E-10.1: Promote use of reclaimed water in compatible farming and ranching settings.

Policy E-10.2: Support the continued availability of water supplies to agricultural users. Agricultural water users should be encouraged to utilize surface water supplies.

Timber Resources

Timber harvesting is an important industry in Amador County. Although timber harvesting is often described as an agricultural activity, the cultural importance of timber production in Amador County is distinct from other agricultural production. Amador County supports the continued viability of timber harvesting. Proper management and production of timber resources can also reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, especially in the eastern portion of the County.



Goal E-12: Promote sustainable forest management that ensures continued timber production, water quality and the timber land base, and reduces the risk of catastrophic fires.

Policy E-12.1: Encourage the continued economic and ecologic viability of timber harvesting and promote creation of defensible space and community wildfire protection.

Policy E-12.2: Maintain Timber Production Zone (TPZ) areas as a renewable source of timber and wood products.

Policy E-12.3: Encourage value-added activities (such as sawmills, cogeneration plants, timber-based manufacturing, and other uses) which contribute to the economic viability of timber production.

Policy E-12.4: Protect timber resource areas from incompatible uses.

Mineral Resources

Mineral production has been an important part of Amador County's economy and culture since the County's founding. Amador County's mineral resources include (among others) clay, sand, gravel, aggregate, quartz sand, copper, silver, gold, soapstone, marble, slate, greenstone, river rip rap, road base, limestone, sandstone, zinc, chromite, talc, lignite, and diamonds.

Goal E-13: Maintain the viability of mineral and aggregate resources and encourage mineral and aggregate resource production in the county.

Policy E-13.1: Ensure extraction and processing of mineral resources and aggregate deposits may continue. Encourage extraction and processing of mineral and aggregate resources.

Policy E-13.2: Promote the expansion or greater utilization of Amador County's mineral and aggregate resources.

Policy E-13.3: Promote value-added manufacturing and processing of Amador County's minerals.

Policy E-13.4: Guide development away from areas where mineral and aggregate extraction is currently occurring and where resources are known to exist. Consider the location of known resources when approving new development.



Industrial Development

Industrial uses in Amador County range in size and type from machine shops to major natural resource processing facilities. Because of this range, the County has identified broad intentions and general priorities for industrial development.

The County supports innovative uses which would result in energy conservation, use of waste products, and in-county processing of primary resources which would otherwise be exported as raw materials. The County seeks to make the best use of existing resources, roads, utilities, services, and land while contributing to the economic base and stability of private employment.

Some areas of the County, especially east of SR 49, have physical restrictions (such as lack of sewer, terrain, or surrounding residential land uses). Smaller and less-intensive industrial uses, including “clean” industries, may be found compatible in these areas on a case-by-case basis through careful review and public hearing process.

These priorities will be followed where it can be shown that new industrial activity will not unduly disturb the lifestyle and environment currently enjoyed by County residents. New or expanded industries should not be encouraged which would use a disproportionate share of County water, sewage treatment capacity, power, traffic circulation capacities, or cause air quality deterioration out of proportion to their economic importance to the County.

Goal E-14: Support and encourage industrial development that does not unduly disturb the lifestyle and environment currently enjoyed by County residents.

Policy E-14.1: Encourage existing industries to remain, expand, and rehabilitate or renovate their facilities.

Policy E-14.2: Promote new industrial development projects which are compatible with and complement existing industry, offer beneficial use of the County’s natural resources, and make use of the present labor force.

Policy E-14.3: Encourage new industrial activity on existing undeveloped sites where existing infrastructure and surrounding land uses are compatible with the type and nature of the potential use.



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