



Amador County, California
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
2021-2025

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Introduction

Amador County, California, is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the region known as the Mother Lode, or Gold Country. Approximately 45 miles east of Sacramento, the county is bordered by El Dorado County on the north, Alpine County on the east, Calaveras County on the south, and Sacramento and San Joaquin Counties on the west.

According to the California Department of Finance, the estimated 2020 population of Amador County is 37,676. There are five incorporated cities in the county with a population of 16,502 and several unincorporated communities. The county is the fifth-smallest county in California by land area, a total of 606 square miles.

Amador County has long experienced population decline and underemployment. The County Board of Supervisors determined that the county needed a plan to help the county and local jurisdictions reverse these trends. In July 2020, the county began creating a five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to help guide investment decisions on infrastructure, public works, and job-creating initiatives.

The Amador County CEDS addresses economic challenges, identifies opportunities, and includes a plan for building a resilient local economy, increased commerce, and employment options. The organization of the CEDS follows the US Economic Development Administration's guidelines.

- The **Technical Report** is a presentation of the data and analysis of the economic conditions of the county and region.
- The **SWOT Analysis** identifies the critical internal and external factors (assets, challenges, threats) that affect the county's economic development potential. Along with the data analysis, findings from the SWOT lead to recommendations and strategies that focus on leveraging strengths and opportunities, overcoming weaknesses or challenges, and mitigating threats.
- The **Action Plan** is designed to implement the strategies and achieve the goals. The Amador County Strategic Action Plan follows six critical Economic Development and Vitality Indicators. Each action item has sufficient detail to ensure all stakeholders understand the who, what, why, and when for organized and efficient implementation.
- The **Performance Metrics** will assist the county in tracking implementation of the CEDS and its impact on the regional economy.
- The concept of **Economic Resilience** is addressed throughout the CEDS document. Specific actions to counter the risks and challenges noted in the Technical Report and SWOT sections are included in the Action Plan as are performance metrics.
- A summary of the **Implementation and Management** of the CEDS is provided as an ongoing tool to ensure the Action Plan's successful execution.
- A discussion of strong **Public Engagement** is the final section of the CEDS.

The following pages introduce the key elements of the Strategic Action Plan.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Desirable community ▪ Existing industry sectors ▪ Education improvements ▪ Existing visitor market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic growth ▪ Community resources ▪ Workforce, talent pipeline ▪ Educational attainment ▪ Visitor amenities
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diversify, expand, and attract job-creating industry ▪ Provide infrastructure ▪ Support entrepreneurs ▪ Strengthen workforce skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recession ▪ Loss of revenue ▪ Natural disasters ▪ Utility disruptions

Vision

"We, the citizens of Amador County, envision the county as a place known for its high-quality rural lifestyle, historic resources, healthy natural environment, vibrant local economy, scenic resources and vistas, and services that meet our people's needs." ¹

Economic Development Goals

- Improve the availability, reliability, and speed of communication services for businesses, workers, students, and residents.
- Create a stronger and more diverse economic base.
- Increase affordable housing and rental options.
- Develop a workforce with the academic and technical skills necessary for careers today and tomorrow.

Strategies

1. Enhance the business climate through strategic policies, partnerships, and public/private investment.
2. Attract, retain, and expand diverse, high-value economic base industry sectors that increase economic strength and resiliency.
3. Support innovative and strategic demand-driven education and training programs that build career pathways in K through 12, articulates through the university level and serves the technical and professional needs of businesses.

¹ Source: Amador County General Plan, 2016

Action Plan

AMADOR COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN	
Economic Development Vitality and Resiliency Indicator	Actions
Economic Development and Job Creation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a collaborative business visitation program 2. Support entrepreneurs 3. Build a countywide e-commerce website 4. Create an investment prospectus for the Opportunity Zone 5. Enhance the visitor experience 6. Attract traded-sector businesses that support and complement the existing industries in Amador County
Education and Talent Supply	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Strengthen academic performance 8. Fill the talent pipeline 9. Develop and expand career technical education pathways
Business Climate and Competitiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Prepare the priority development sites 11. Review the development process to ensure it is efficient and business-friendly
Physical Infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Support city, county, and special districts' initiatives and applications for funding to develop critical infrastructure
Equitable and Sustainable Communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Actively pursue public/private partnerships and funding to increase affordable housing options 14. Support and collaborate with efforts to increase affordable child care 15. Increase walkability within and connections between communities and employment centers
Threats to Resiliency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Reduce the threat of wildfire to Amador County businesses and residents

Technical Report Summary

This Technical Report Summary is organized by key foundational economic development vitality and resiliency indicators: Education and Talent Supply, Economic Development and Job Creation, Business Climate and Competitiveness, Physical Infrastructure, Equitable, and Sustainable Communities, Threats to Resiliency, and SWOT. The findings of the Technical Report were used to develop the strategic initiatives and actions contained in the Action Plan. The full Technical Report is included in the Appendix.

Educational Attainment

Increasing educational attainment and talent supply is an important foundational strategy for Amador County to initiate transformation. Educated and skilled talent is the cornerstone of a sustainable economic future. The majority of jobs created in this country over the next ten years will require some post-secondary education. Trends in Amador County indicate this future may be threatened by several factors, including:

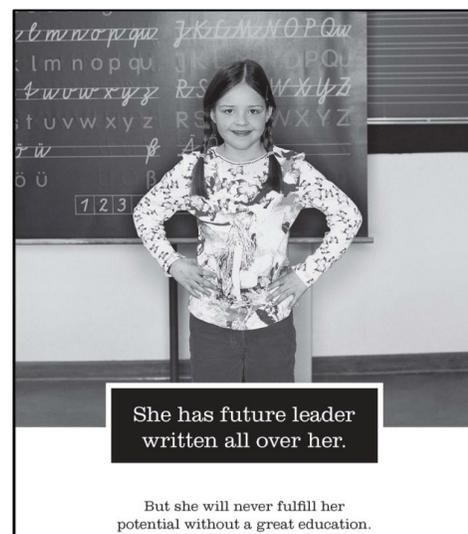
- High school completions are up, but the completion of higher degrees is falling behind (an essential indicator of a skilled talent pool).
- Students in the county do not perform as well on state assessment tests.
- SAT scores are higher than the state average, however, consistently fewer Amador County students take the SAT.
- The talent pipeline, the source of the future workforce, is flat.

The critical importance of a well-funded education and technical training system cannot be overstated. Educational attainment is a key ingredient for social and economic mobility. It increases the productivity of workers and can provide a pathway to higher-paying work.

Many of the challenges faced by the county to create a better and more robust educational system are hampered by low incomes, stagnant job and population growth, and limited funding. Strategies and initiatives contained in the Action Plan will help address these key socio-economic issues which will in turn influence the educational trends currently being experienced.

Local efforts underway to move the needle on educational attainment include:

- Consideration of a bond measure to upgrade Amador County USD school buildings and facilities in 2022.
- Amador County USD membership and implementation of Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a national program to close the opportunity gap in college graduation rates and college and career readiness and success.



- Support and implementation of Career Technical Education (CTE) through recognized career pathways and dual enrollment agreements and partnerships with local community colleges.
- Amador College Connect makes a four-year degree possible without leaving the county.
- Partnerships with local community colleges and the Mother Lode Job Training Consortium to focus on educational pathways that result in industry-recognized training leading to careers with living wages.

Transforming Amador County's socio-economic profile into a more balanced and resilient economy is dependent on many diverse and interconnected factors. At the top of the list, however, is employment growth and wages. It's hard to have a good quality of life without a job and nearly impossible to get a job that pays a family-sustaining wage without education and skills. Helping students identify and pursue a career pathway that leads to the completion of a degree or certificate is paramount.

Workforce Supply and Demand

Building a strong talent pipeline is a critical factor in a community's ability to compete and prosper. A skilled workforce helps to retain existing employers and attract new jobs, companies, and investment. High population growth rates for younger working-age persons (ages 25-44) suggest new residents are attracted to an area, growing the workforce, adding to the innovation base, and launching new businesses. The Amador County talent pipeline, the source of the future workforce, is flat. There is no growth in the 0-19 age group (Gen Z) and little growth in the 20-39 age group to replace aging workers. Amador County's share of youth is consistently below that of the state, with the most significant difference in the 25- to 34-year-old age group (Millennials). The percent of Experienced Workers (ages 40-59) is also declining (further constricting the labor pool). The Retiring Soon age group (ages 60-79) leaving the workforce is growing. The shrinking talent pipeline is a red flag to businesses.

“Any community unable to attract and hold talent will join a growing number of economically doomed places where economic development is impossible.”

*Mark Lautman,
When the Boomers Bail*

The Central/Mother Lode Regional Consortium's 2019 Regional Plan found the largest undersupply of middle-skill workers in the business sector, followed by retail, hospitality, construction (including energy and utilities), and health care.

Soft skills, such as effective communication, English, and customer service are the baseline skills most highly sought by employers.

Maintaining and increasing training (soft and hard skills) for occupations that are growing in the county and region that support industry targets (manufacturing, agriculture, natural resources, health care, hospitality, information technology, and construction) will help to fill the skills gap of the resident workforce and aid in efforts to attract targeted industry sectors.

Economic Development and Job Creation

INDUSTRY TRENDS

Amador County's economy, like others, depends on a balance of three sectors (Traded, Population Driven, Visitor Sector). Many businesses are a hybrid of population and visitor-serving. They provide goods and services to locals and those who are traveling through Amador County to other destinations, e.g. restaurants, service stations. Traded sector businesses provide goods and services to customers outside of the region; they export goods and import dollars. The importance of the traded sector versus population-serving businesses is that the traded sector tends to offer higher wages which enables employees to increase spending on household items and adds to disposable income. Amador County's economy is heavy on the retail and service industries—82 percent of the employment in Amador County is in the population-driven and visitor markets.

Even though government is not an industry, it accounts for over 10 percent of employment in Amador County, a disproportionately larger share than the statewide 4.5 percent. In 2016, over 46 percent of reported personal earnings were derived from the government.

A decline in the government sector locally would therefore have a disproportionately negative impact on employment and earnings. Severe fiscal problems experienced by local, state, and federal governments (as currently experienced due to COVID-19) could increase the drag on the county's economy and prolong economic recovery, while also hurting public services.

In addition to paying employees and providing public services, federal, state, and local governments are substantial buyers of goods and services from private businesses. Spending cuts, employee furloughs, and layoffs by government entities doing business in the county could affect local business health and growth.

The population- and visitor-serving businesses have been among the hardest-hit during the COVID-19 pandemic and economists predict they will be among the last to recover. Adding to the COVID-19 impact, recent and ongoing fires and resulting smoke and unhealthy air quality have further negatively impacted both the visitor and local serving businesses.

Over the past eight years, in Amador County, the following industries have added jobs, are growing faster than the US average (for that industry) and are expected to continue to have positive job growth or output. These industries include:

- Agriculture
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Power Generation
- Professional Services
- Health Care Services
- Hospitality
- Transportation and Logistics

“Economic development is about acting to ensure that the economy of your community (income and savings) grows faster than your population (service burden or expenses) so the community has the extra resources in the future to finance improvements.”

*Mark Lautman,
When the Boomers Bail*

Diversifying the economy to include a greater share of traded sector businesses will improve the stability and resilience of Amador County's overall economy, and lessen the economic impacts associated with catastrophic events, such as COVID-19 on a single industry sector. Industry diversification and resiliency strategies are presented in the Action Plan.

TARGETED INDUSTRY SECTORS

The following industries are targeted for attraction, startup, expansion, and retention in Amador County. The industry targets align with the regional marketing and workforce development groups' industry focus—Central Sierra Economic Development District and the Mother Lode Workforce Development Board and Job Training. These industry sectors represent the foundation for innovation, competitiveness, and support the diversification of the economic base, improved health, sustainability, energy self-sufficiency, resiliency, and shared prosperity.

- Manufacturing
- Agriculture and Support Services
- Natural Resources (biomass, forest products, and management, mining)
- Health Care
- Hospitality (tourism)
- Information Technology
- Construction

Success with diversification and especially with the attraction and retention of industry sectors that provide a family-sustaining wage will largely be dependent on upgrading the educational attainment and skill level of the resident workforce.

Labor Force and Employment Growth

Amador County faces several challenges related to the labor force and employment growth including:

- The average annual population growth in Amador County is less than one percent.
- The growth of the talent pipeline, which is the source of future workers, is flat.
- The educational attainment of the workforce age group (25 to 64 years) lags that of the state.
- Less than half (44 percent) of the labor pool is participating in the workforce which is far below the statewide participation rate of 63 percent.

Building and sustaining a diverse economy by attracting and retaining industry sectors that provide a family-supporting wage depends largely on having a resident workforce that is large enough and has the appropriate education and skills sufficient to meet employers' current and future hiring needs.

Development Opportunities

Balancing the needs of the resident population with the need to continue investment in physical infrastructure to accommodate growth and support job-creating industry will be challenging. Currently, Amador County and its cities have a limited inventory of fully improved industrial property. Lack of industrial property improved with off- and on-site infrastructure is a major obstacle to economic growth. The county continues to remain non-competitive with other regional locations due to this limitation. Development opportunities for the county and cities are listed below. The realization of the economic development potential of these areas will depend on securing funding for these infrastructure improvements.

The county has four principal development areas that offer opportunities for industrial and commercial growth (Martell Regional Service Center, Pine Grove, Buckhorn, and River Pines Town Centers). The Martell Regional Service Center is the largest, over 679 acres, with 33 percent, or approximately 225 acres zoned for commercial and industrial use. The Martell Regional Service Center also includes two fully improved industrial business parks that can accommodate additional growth. The Pine Grove, Buckhorn, and River Pines Town Centers offer approximately 238,000 square feet of land available for commercial development.

- The City of Lodi has over 1,300 acres of land planned for industrial use (all unimproved), an 80-acre former youth correctional facility (now abandoned and surplus State property), and commercial development opportunities in the historic downtown core.
- The cities of Jackson, Amador City, and Sutter Creek have development opportunities in their historic downtown core; however, any future development is dependent on the availability of supporting physical infrastructure.

Business Climate and Competitiveness

REGULATORY PROCESS, FEES, AND INCENTIVES

California is a high-cost state. Among the factors cited as contributing to the high business costs in California are business taxes that are 22 percent higher than the national average, workers' compensation rates 61 percent higher than average, one of the highest minimum wage rates in the nation, stricter overtime rules, and higher litigation costs.²

Given this uneven start out of the gate, Amador County and cities work hard to establish and implement local policies and programs that foster a competitive business climate. Because of the state's high business costs, Amador County's best opportunity for new business locations are often companies already located in California that are expanding, or businesses considering a move out of the state due to high costs at their current location.

A competitive business climate includes a collaborative, seamless, consistent, and easy to understand the permitting process and regulatory system. Friendly and timely customer service is another key component of economic development competitiveness. Removing barriers to business growth and development, providing specialized services and infrastructure that helps reduce costs, increase efficiency, and increase local businesses' market share makes the county a more competitive business environment.

Commitment to seeking innovative incentives and implementing business-friendly regulatory processes will be critical to achieving the county's economic potential. A continuing challenge is the need to balance the consideration and provision of incentives with the need to measure the benefits of these incentives relative to the cost of the public expenditure and contribution to social equity.

SMALL BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

Small business is big business in Amador County; 58 percent of the businesses in the county have less than five employees and 99 percent have less than 50 employees. One of the biggest obstacles to small business growth is access to capital. Declining creditworthiness of small business borrowers, an unwillingness of banks to lend money to small businesses, and tightened regulatory standards on bank

² <https://cfce.calchamber.com/wp-content/reports/CFCE-Cost-of-Doing-Business-in-California.pdf>

loans have all been barriers to small business growth. Various non-conventional loan programs in the region provide much-needed capital to support startups and small businesses. These programs have contributed to the growth of small businesses, however, additional targeted efforts to increase access to these resources is needed.

Innovation contributes to increased economic diversity and resiliency. Increasing innovation in Amador County will require building a skilled talent pool, enhancing entrepreneurial and small business support, and enhanced efforts to provide access to new technology and markets. Strategies that address innovation and small business development are provided in the Action Plan.

GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

According to a joint project of the Brookings Institute and JPMorgan Chase, a US company with developed export markets is going to have 100 percent higher revenues, and be able to sustain a 70 percent larger staff at 20 percent higher wages on average, than their non-exporting competitors.³ A global network reaching into diverse markets better equips a business to weather the kinds of economic downturns that have historically left Amador County and the Mother Lode region with lingering unemployment, while other regions have recovered.

Regional resources are available to Amador County businesses and entrepreneurs. However, a continuing challenge will be linking these global market and innovation resources with local entrepreneurs and businesses. Increased efforts to communicate resource availability more effectively through local outlets (chambers of commerce, cities, county, and regional providers) will be important to increase access and use of these sources of technical assistance and financing by local businesses and entrepreneurs.

Physical Infrastructure

The quality of the county and city's infrastructure is critical to their ability to grow and maintain a vibrant economy. Efficient and well-maintained infrastructure will make the county more competitive and able to accommodate business and job growth. Investments in broadband, transportation, water, and wastewater are critical assets that support economic vitality and quality of life. Given the enormous costs associated with infrastructure creation, maintenance, replacement, and operation, affordable funding mechanisms are needed to ensure that needed investments are made in a timely manner and to address backlogs and keep pace with new growth.

The county, cities, and special districts continue to invest in physical infrastructure to expand services to new developing areas, replace deficient equipment, and maintain existing services. Many of these improvements were financed using federal and state grants and low-interest loan programs. Recent infrastructure projects include expansion of road and bridge improvements, water and wastewater treatment facilities, and park and recreation facilities.

In the Development Opportunities subsection, development areas in the county and cities were listed and described. The realization of the economic development potential of these areas will be dependent on securing funding for infrastructure improvements. Over \$400 million in capital improvements needed to support job and economic growth are listed in the Technical Report. Among the capital improvement projects are:

- Transportation, road, and bridge repairs and improvements
- Traffic and pedestrian circulation improvements

³ [California Central Valley Export Plan – Brookings Institution and JPMorgan Chase](#)

- Airport hangar improvements
- Electric car charging station installations
- Infrastructure extension, installation, and capacity improvements including broadband, water, sewer, wastewater, and power

EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Equitable development means making public and private investments in communities that support those most in need and that considers the history and current conditions so that future outcomes are equitably distributed, both for those currently living and working in the county, as well as new arrivals.

With lower per capita and household incomes, lower educational attainment, and other socio-economic conditions that impact the quality of life, strategic initiatives designed to address these core issues are needed. Education, training, and economic development partners will need to strengthen efforts to increase educational attainment and skill development to ensure that as job growth occurs, residents will benefit. Continued community engagement so that people can gain some measure of ownership over the future of their neighborhoods is also very important.

Threats to Resiliency

Amador County's reliance on the visitor, population-based, and government sectors as the primary source of jobs and revenue is a threat to a sustainable economic future. Continued efforts to foster a culture of innovation and diversity to the economic base through targeting expanding and emerging sectors that are a good match with the county's unique assets and competitive strengths will provide stability during downturns that disproportionately impact these sectors, as evidenced by the current COVID-19 pandemic and poor air quality due to wildfires in the west and northwest. Robust strategies to address pandemics, natural disasters (particularly wildfire), and regulatory issues (PSPS and fire insurance) are more difficult to address at the local level. Strategies that address key issues associated with threats to resiliency are presented in the Action Plan.

SWOT Assessment

The Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) assessment process has been used by businesses for decades to determine preferred strategies and identify risks and opportunities within a market. Communities similarly use a SWOT analysis. The primary objective of conducting an Economic Development SWOT analysis for a community is to create full awareness of all the factors considered when businesses are deciding on the best location for their operations.

The findings from a SWOT lead to recommendations and strategies that focus on leveraging strengths and opportunities, overcoming weaknesses or challenges, and mitigating threats.

Strengths are tangible and intangible assets a community has and can offer businesses. Strengths and assets set a community apart and give it a competitive advantage over its competition. For example:

- Highly talented workforce
- Market-ready industrial and commercial sites and buildings
- Physical location and natural resources
- Market access (highways, commercial airport, deep water port)
- Operating costs including wages, fee structure
- Community vision
- Quality of life (safety, education, amenities)

Weaknesses are factors that detract from a community's economic development competitiveness. A weakness constricts or limits a community from reaching its desired goal. For example:

- Debt, or lack of financial resources
- Population growth rate and demographics
- Quality and quantity of workforce
- Insufficient infrastructure capacity

Opportunities refer to factors that offer a potential competitive advantage and contribute to goal and objective achievement. For example:

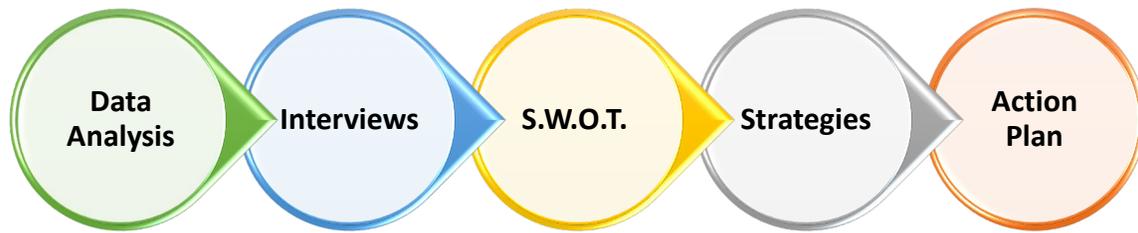
- Land owned by a jurisdiction that needs infrastructure to make it market-ready
- Existing organizations that could collaborate to provide new or a wider range of services
- Economically strong businesses that may be ready to expand operations
- Industry clusters with similar suppliers that could be targeted for attraction

Threats are external factors that put a community or economy at risk, and they are often beyond a community's direct control. However, jurisdictions may be able to put in place programs or contingency plans to respond to the threat. For example:

- Natural disasters (wildfire, drought, earthquake)
- Economic shifts
- Federal and state regulations

The Amador County SWOT Assessment is a culmination of data and trends analysis presented in the Technical Report (see Appendix), a review of background documents, several dozen personal interviews with community stakeholders, and the findings from an online social engagement website and survey designed specifically for the Amador County CEDS (see Appendix).

The economic development strategies resulting from this SWOT are based on (1) taking advantage of the county's strengths and assets; (2) mitigating the challenges; and (3) advancing the opportunities; all of which are (4) validated through interviews; and (5) supported with a detailed action plan for implementation.



Strengths and Assets

<p>COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resident/business involvement and engagement ▪ General Plan updates, permitting, new online systems, and specific plans ▪ Low crime ▪ Historic downtowns ▪ Full-service communities, e.g. jobs, shopping, health care, parks, and recreation 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business and residents desire a well-maintained and well-planned community with the services and amenities necessary for a high quality of life
<p>ECONOMY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Favorable cost of living compared to the state ▪ Entrepreneurial spirit ▪ Declining poverty level ▪ Established agricultural base and growing industries including increasing recognition as a quality grape and wine region 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower cost of living is a favorable sign for new residents, new businesses, and potential entrepreneurs ▪ Entrepreneurship improves the standard of living and creates wealth for the entrepreneur and related businesses (suppliers). This wealth is most often kept within the community as locally owned businesses are more likely to contribute to community projects, support local charities, youth sports, etc.

Strengths and Assets

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Job and output growth along with a declining poverty rate are indications of economic growth
<p>WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High school graduation rate is improving ▪ More rigorous high school graduation requirements ▪ Local access to post-secondary education through Amador College Connect ▪ Career technical education (CTE) and pathway agreements with community colleges ▪ Mother Lode Job Training, Amador Economic Prosperity Center 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employers seek an existing educated and skilled workforce and assurance of a continuous pipeline of skilled labor ▪ Established linkages between primary and post-secondary educational institutions and workforce demonstrate a recognition of the importance of skilled labor to business success and the local economy
<p>TOURISM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing visitor market which is driven by wine tastings, outdoor recreation, history ▪ Sites on the National Register of Historic Places and California Historical Landmarks ▪ Historic ambiance and character is maintained and valued ▪ Natural resources and venues offer a wide range of outdoor recreation 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Historic and natural resources are a competitive advantage—they are rare, valuable, and hard to imitate—and they will continue to attract visitors

Challenges

<p>COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget constraints and loss of revenue to businesses and jurisdictions due to COVID-19 ▪ Aging infrastructure, limited capacity, and financial constraints to supporting improvements or expansion of visitor and resident amenities (parks, recreation, sidewalks, pathways, etc.) ▪ Housing shortage for workers ▪ Limited public transportation ▪ Unmet demand for subsidized child care 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The pandemic and pending economic shift bring a greater potential for business closures and job losses ▪ Less money to support economic expansion and maintenance of existing facilities, services, and resources ▪ Lack of affordable housing is a constraint to employment growth and expansion of the labor pool
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Challenges

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Threat of wildfires ▪ Cost of fire insurance ▪ Regional organizations are spread thin with large geographic areas to cover with limited resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of public transportation and subsidized child care limits employment opportunities for some ▪ Wildfire threat impacts home security and the cost of insurance for existing and potentially new buyers ▪ Budget constraints limit resources and services offered by regional organizations
<p>ECONOMY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very little growth in personal income and a substantial share comes from retirement or disability benefits ▪ Stagnant population growth ▪ The economy is heavily weighted on retail and service sectors ▪ Entrepreneurial spirit not well-supported with business assistance services ▪ Market access via two-lane state highways ▪ Limited commercial/industrial land and buildings that is fully served with infrastructure ▪ Limited access to broadband throughout the county, especially in the more rural areas 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Income derived from transfer payments or passive earnings (e.g. retirements, disability) versus work earnings indicates a sluggish economy ▪ Slow growth in personal earnings means less discretionary income, less spending, and a decline in sales tax revenues ▪ The flat population growth suggests a weak consumer market demand ▪ A higher share of employment in retail and services is concerning as these industries typically pay lower wages ▪ The economic impact derived from higher-skilled and higher-wage jobs is much greater ▪ With limited help and support for business and entrepreneurs, (e.g. small business counseling, financing, mentoring) the county could be losing business startups and expansions ▪ Lack of interstates or major four-lane highways limits the county's ability to support distribution reliant businesses ▪ Limited sites and buildings make Amador County less competitive with communities that have ready-for-market properties ▪ Limited access to high-speed broadband restricts the county's ability to support businesses, home-based entrepreneurs, and telecommuters reliant on broadband

Challenges

<p>WORKFORCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Slow/flat population growth and low labor participation rate ▪ One-half of Amador County workers are imported from other counties; three-quarters of the working population leave the county for employment ▪ No growth in the talent pipeline to replace experienced workers exiting the labor force 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Flat population growth and school enrollment, coupled with a lower share of youth, and a higher share of older residents indicates a limited labor pool and talent pipeline ▪ A significant number of out-commuters, low labor force participation rate, and the housing shortage force businesses to look outside the county to attract workers and new prospective businesses may reject the county for other locations with a more robust labor pool and talent pipeline
<p>EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share of the population with four-year degrees is declining ▪ Educational attainment of the workforce age group (25 to 64 years) is declining ▪ Low scores on the mandated CAASP standard assessment tests given to grades 3-8 and 11 ▪ Many school facilities and infrastructure are old and in need of repair; recent bond measure failed ▪ Limited education or training programs for occupations projected to be in demand 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The declining share of the population with four-year degrees indicates that college-bound students may not be completing their studies ▪ The majority of living-wage jobs require some level of post-secondary education ▪ Potential new employers will judge the county's commitment to education by both the physical assets and academic achievement ▪ Employers expect skills training, programs, and pathways to be in place
<p>TOURISM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited amenities ▪ Lack of wayfinding signage ▪ Limited local coordination, cross-promoting ▪ No 24/7 information kiosk for the region ▪ No four-star lodging ▪ Limited meeting rooms 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visitor expectations include easily accessible information, free parking, places to sit and relax, a clean and safe environment, public restrooms, hospitable and quality service, family-friendly recreation, free high-speed connectivity, and emergency services ▪ The shortage of four-star lodging choices limits higher-income visitors and businesses ▪ The lack of accommodations with meeting and break-out rooms limits the business and social conference market

Opportunities

<p>DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY BY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attracting manufacturing firms that supply and support existing growing industries (e.g. agriculture, wine, recreation, construction, and natural resources) ▪ Supporting the expansion of the health care sector with services that meet the needs of the aging population ▪ Attracting new businesses and services that support the tourism and recreation industries ▪ Providing the necessary visitor infrastructure ▪ Securing infrastructure funding for city and county development opportunity areas ▪ Packaging and marketing the Opportunity Zone (e.g. Cedar Mill site) 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A diversified economy is more resilient ▪ Expanding industries like manufacturing and medical services will bring more skilled jobs that provide better wages; without this, retail and service sectors remain the primary drivers for economic growth ▪ Existing manufacturing firms should welcome new vendors and/or customers locating in Amador County ▪ Supporting the visitor market with amenities and infrastructure could open it up to new, broader markets which in turn creates demand for additional lodging, restaurants, etc. and increases revenues ▪ The Opportunity Zone offers unique investment prospects, making it more attractive to potential investors and businesses
<p>ENHANCE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting entrepreneurship and small businesses ▪ Pursuing greater broadband access, especially within the development opportunity areas 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A large percentage of businesses in Amador County employ less than ten. Business assistance to small and micro-businesses and entrepreneurs is critical now and in the future ▪ Lack of broadband is a limiting constraint to business development
<p>STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creating and expanding education and training opportunities for in-demand occupations, through career pathways, industry-relevant credentials, apprenticeships, etc. 	<p>SIGNIFICANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhanced education and training opportunities for in-demand occupations will lead to educational attainment and employment in living wage jobs ▪ Building a strong talent pipeline is a critical factor to a community's ability to compete and prosper

Threats

POTENTIAL THREATS

- Recession, which the ability to address threats
- Reduced revenue stream
- Natural disasters (wildfires)
- Federal and State downsizing
- Health-related disasters, pandemics
- Cost and availability of insurance
- Utility disruptions (PSPS)

SIGNIFICANCE

- Weaknesses or challenges identified through a SWOT analysis can be mitigated
- Threats are factors or situations over which communities have limited or no control
- Currently, the economic stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to a lesser degree, the recent wildfires will continue to have a strong negative impact on the economy
- At best, communities should be prepared with plans in place to respond quickly and coordinate resources to manage the threat

Action Plan

The Action Plan presented in this section implements the goals of the 2021-2025 Amador County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy by addressing the challenges and opportunities identified in the Technical Report (e.g. educational attainment, infrastructure needs).

The Action Plan is organized by six critical Economic Development and Vitality Indicators. Table 1 is a summary of the 16 specific action items for each of the Economic Development and Vitality Indicators. Each action item has sufficient detail to ensure all stakeholders understand the who, what, why, and when for organized and efficient implementation.

Following the Action Plan are tools for managing implementation and performance monitoring.

Vision

"We, the citizens of Amador County, envision the county as a place known for its high-quality rural lifestyle, historic resources, healthy natural environment, vibrant local economy, scenic resources and vistas, and services that meet our people's needs." ⁴

Economic Development Goals

- Improve the availability, reliability, and speed of communication services for businesses, workers, students, and residents.
- Create a stronger and more diverse economic base.
- Increase affordable housing and rental options.
- Develop a workforce with the academic and technical skills necessary for careers today and tomorrow.

Strategies

17. Enhance the business climate through strategic policies, partnerships, and public/private investment.
18. Attract, retain, and expand diverse, high-value economic base industry sectors that increase economic strength and resiliency.
19. Support innovative and strategic demand-driven education and training programs that build career pathways in K through 12, articulates through the university level and serves the technical and professional needs of businesses.

⁴ Source: Amador County General Plan, 2016

Table 1. Summary Action Plan

AMADOR COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN	
Economic Development Vitality and Resiliency Indicator	Actions
Economic Development and Job Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20. Establish a collaborative business visitation program 21. Support entrepreneurs 22. Build a countywide e-commerce website 23. Create an investment prospectus for the Opportunity Zone 24. Enhance the visitor experience 25. Attract traded-sector businesses that support and complement the existing industries in Amador County
Education and Talent Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26. Strengthen academic performance 27. Fill the talent pipeline 28. Develop and expand career technical education pathways
Business Climate and Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 29. Prepare the priority development sites 30. Review the development process to ensure it is efficient and business-friendly
Physical Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 31. Support city, county, and special districts' initiatives and applications for funding to develop critical infrastructure
Equitable and Sustainable Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Actively pursue public/private partnerships and funding to increase affordable housing options 33. Support and collaborate with efforts to increase affordable child care 34. Increase walkability within and connections between communities and employment centers
Threats to Resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35. Reduce the threat of wildfire to Amador County businesses and residents

Economic Development and Job Creation

ACTION 1. ESTABLISH A COLLABORATIVE BUSINESS VISITATION PROGRAM

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategy 2.</p> <p>An active business visitation program is important to existing businesses and prospective new businesses. Any company considering locating in a community wants to know that they will continue to be an important part of the community year after year. And existing businesses are a good source of leads for business attraction. Through their connections and industry networks, they may know of other businesses (customers or vendors) seeking new locations.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the commercial and industrial businesses to be visited. Areas should be drawn so that each can be walked in the time allotted. Consider sectioning the areas by city, downtown street, industrial park, etc. • Determine the frequency of business walks based on the number of team members available and the number of businesses to be visited. • Schedule each walk. Specific days and times may have to be adjusted throughout the year, but having a set schedule makes it easier for the team members to know when to expect the business walk. • Visit as many businesses as possible in the area selected for that day in the timeframe specified. Three or four teams of two people canvassing an area can expect to reach 25 to 30 businesses. • These are informal visits lasting five to fifteen minutes, ask how the business is doing and determine if there are any specific needs or opportunities for training, financing, assistance, new markets, etc. • Leave behind a business card or postcard with contact information, resources available, upcoming events, workshops, pending street or infrastructure improvements in the area, and opportunities for businesses to be more involved in the county or city's economic development efforts. • If specific needs are identified during the visit (financing, expansion, hiring, training, etc.) make a record of the follow-up required and refer it to the appropriate person. • Follow up to ensure that information or services were provided and the business is satisfied.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	MLJT, SBDC, Chamber, Cities, County, CEDS Committee
Performance Measurement(s)	<p>Number of new business locations</p> <p>Number of local business expansions</p> <p>Number of businesses assisted, issues resolved</p> <p>Reduced vacancies</p>
Timeline	To be determined.

ACTION 2. SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURS

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 1 and 2.</p> <p>A frequent comment during the community engagement (interviews) was the lack of help for small businesses. Fifty-eight percent of the businesses in the county have less than five employees and 99 percent have less than 50 employees, and a significant share of these businesses are locally-owned. The benefits entrepreneurs offer to a community's local economy include local wealth generation, local decision-making, strong community support and involvement, and an affinity to stay in the community. Entrepreneurs improve the standard of living and create wealth for the entrepreneur and related businesses such as their vendors.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase Resources & Tools for Business Success. <p><i>Resources and Tools for Business Success</i> is a time-tested, subscription-based online tool that supports communities' business startup efforts by providing immediate access to local information and service providers. Local businesses and prospective entrepreneurs can easily find the information and resources they need to be successful. Amador County will be seen as the source of that information and assistance and will send the message that the county and cities are strong supporters of entrepreneurs and small business success.</p> <p>The subscription cost is a \$300 one-time setup fee and \$1,500 a year (for jurisdictions between 20,000 and 60,000 population). The annual subscription is payable quarterly or annually. The <i>Resources</i> staff is available to help bring in local sponsors and design local promotional flyers. It would take less than 30 days to have Amador County's site ready.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) office in Amador County. <p>Prepare a proposal to present to the San Joaquin Delta College SBDC director to fund an SBDC office in Amador County. The proposal should include: an identified person to manage the office, office location, a roster of potential local counselors, budget, letters of support from local banks, accounting firms, small businesses, and jurisdictions.</p>
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	MLJT, County, Cities, Chamber, local merchants and associations, Amador County Council of Tourism
Performance Measurement(s)	New small business startups Resource subscription analytics
Timeline	To be determined.
Resource	Resources and Tools for Business Success office 406.543.2275 cell 916.718.3311

ACTION 3. BUILD A COUNTYWIDE E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategy 2.</p> <p>Strong retail sales contribute to business success and growth, and a healthy local tax base which is important to jurisdictional budgets and funding critical community services.</p> <p>About half of the businesses responding to the public engagement survey stated that they have no online commerce. A collaborative e-commerce website will help these local retailers gain access to a global market. Visitors may also be interested in purchasing online from a store they remember visiting and enjoying.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the interest of local businesses in participating. • Based on the response, consider the financial feasibility. • If warranted, establish a volunteer task force to explore potential vendors to build or supply an e-commerce site.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	Local retailers, Chamber, Amador County Council of Tourism, SBDC
Performance Measurement(s)	<p>Increased sales tax revenue</p> <p>Website analytics</p>
Timeline	To be determined.
Resource	<p>Support Local is an example of an e-commerce design firm that provides templates for a shared marketplace or one website for all participating Amador County merchants. The platform is designed for businesses that already have an e-commerce presence and those just starting.</p> <p>Popular and highly-rated do-it-yourself e-commerce website builders are Wix Stores, Square Online, and Big Commerce</p>

ACTION 4. CREATE AN INVESTMENT PROSPECTUS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY ZONE

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 1 and 2.</p> <p>Having an Opportunity Zone is not enough to attract an investor. The community must demonstrate that an investment will provide the investor with a market rate of return. The projects that are of interest to Opportunity Zone Fund Managers are those with documentation that the market will support the project and provide a reasonable return on investment.</p> <p>The best approach for marketing an Opportunity Zone is an investment prospectus designed to communicate the value proposition and investment opportunities and show developers and investors the Return on Investment (ROI).</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on the preferred reuse of the parcel within the Opportunity Zone with the most immediate development potential (old cedar mill site). Possibilities include forest products or biomass; production, manufacturing, R&D. • Provide enough detail in the prospectus that investors can effectually evaluate the feasibility, costs, and risk, e.g. general plan designation and zoning, infrastructure availability and capacity, preferred uses, site profile, financial feasibility pro forma, potential site layouts. • Add a "Development Opportunities" page to the County's website to house the prospectus. • Promote the prospectus to Opportunity Zone fund managers, investment firms, regional commercial and industrial real estate brokers, and target industries.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	County, property owner(s), local investors, commercial/industrial real estate brokers, financial institutions, Certified Public Accountants, utilities
Performance Measurement(s)	New investment and employment growth in the Amador County Opportunity Zone
Timeline	To be determined.
Resources	<p>CalOZ is a nonprofit trade organization working to ensure the potential of California Opportunity Zones (OZs) is achieved.</p> <p>Two sample Opportunity Zone Prospectus: I-5 Investment Opportunities and Stockton Opportunity Zones.</p>

ACTION 5. ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

<p>Rationale</p>	<p>Implements Strategies 1 and 2.</p> <p>The visitor market does three things: 1) it imports "new money" into the local economy that supports local government fiscal health, supplements the tax base, and helps pay for municipal services, amenities, and continued placemaking improvements; 2) it creates jobs for all skill sets; entry-level workers, semi-skilled, professional, management, and technical workers in a variety of occupations; and 3) it promotes new business development and opportunities for entrepreneurs.</p>
<p>Implementation Tasks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand Amenities <p>Develop and implement a branded, countywide wayfinding signage program that serves both pedestrians and vehicles in finding downtowns, restaurants, parking, historic venues, recreational sites, trails, parks, etc.</p> <p>Collaborate with city and county departments, and private property owners to add amenities that provide visitors with exceptional experiences and encourages extended stays; e.g., shaded seating in downtowns, open spaces, and small parks, easy pedestrian walkways, clean and safe restrooms, free wireless connectivity.</p> <p>Establish visitor information kiosks throughout the county that are available 24/7, require no staff, promote the entire county and cities, and orient visitors to indoor and outdoor venues.</p> <p>Supplement the physical kiosks with a digital version. Stay away from apps that require visitors to download the app for a one time use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Superior Customer Service <p>Train front-line employees serving guests including retail and hotel clerks, restaurant servers, and visitor sites such as mine and cave tours, tasting rooms, museums, etc. Focus training on providing excellent customer service, local knowledge, folklore, history, and community events. Instill in everyone that they should consider themselves an ambassador for Amador County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote <p>Engage volunteer photographers to document events and build a photo library for use on community and visitor websites and social media.</p> <p>Engage volunteer writers to write and submit articles to local media and national travel journals and websites.</p> <p>Encourage local retailers to participate in visitor marketing by becoming well-versed in the details of events and or venues around the county (specific date, location, key events, the average number of visitors, similar events during the same time, how and where to find more information e.g. if registration is required).</p> <p>Encourage employees to engage customers in conversations that will lead to further discussion and promote other venues; e.g. "where are you from... what brings you to Amador County... have you visited...; have you seen..."</p> <p>Encourage hotels and retailers to have a guest book and collect visitor contact information (if they wish to volunteer it), and their home city.</p>

ACTION 5. ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

	From the guest book establish a database of contacts, addresses, and/or emails for collaborative marketing and promotion.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	Amador County Council of Tourism, cities, county, downtowns, local retailers, Chamber, MLJT
Performance Measurement(s)	Increase in TOT revenue Amenities added Increase in retail sales tax Increased exposure; hits on chamber/tourism websites
Timeline	To be determined.
Resource	Destination Development Association is a member-based organization that offers a video library, webinars, and other resources for communities engaged in the visitor market.

ACTION 6. ATTRACT TRADED-SECTOR BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT AND COMPLEMENT THE EXISTING INDUSTRIES IN AMADOR COUNTY

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategy 2.</p> <p>A more diverse economy is a goal of the CEDS and the target industries identified are among those that have added jobs and are expected to continue to have positive job growth or output. To successfully attract new companies communities need to be organized and effective throughout the sales process thereby reducing the chance of being eliminated from the often long list of candidate locations.</p> <p>Because of the state's reputation as a highly regulated and costly state in which to do business, Amador County's best opportunity for new business locations are likely to be companies already located in California that are expanding, or businesses considering a move out of the state due to high costs at their current location.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once site profiles are prepared (see Action 10: Prepare The Development Opportunity Sites), get them into the hands of regional commercial/industrial real estate brokers and developers so they understand the opportunity, the jurisdictions' plans, and goals for the sites. Given Amador County's limited human and financial resources to pursue potential industry targets, the county will need to rely on commercial/industrial real estate brokers and developers to market the sites. • Create a database of regional commercial/industrial real estate brokers and developers. • Send a letter or email introducing the priority sites, target industries, and development opportunities, with full contact information for requests for further information. • Continue to stay in touch and ensure they are aware of any changes to the sites, progress on infrastructure improvements, new business locations, etc. • When appropriate (post-COVID) consider hosting commercial/industrial real estate brokers and developers to an Amador County tour, visit the properties, meet property owners, city and county representatives who can talk about the market, development process, etc. Ask for their input on how you can support their marketing efforts, types of inquiries they receive, the type of information they need to sell your sites. • Be ready to put together a winning proposal as leads are received.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	Cities, county, property owners, elected officials, special districts, and utility companies
Performance Measurement(s)	<p>New business locations</p> <p>Infrastructure improvements</p> <p>Increase in inquiries of opportunity sites</p>
Timeline	To be determined.
Resources	Site Visit Tips; Ideal Proposal Outline (Appendix)

Education and Talent Supply

ACTION 7. STRENGTHEN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategy 2.</p> <p>The majority of living wage jobs/careers require post-secondary education, certifications, and licenses.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to embrace and expand Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) in Amador County schools. • Identify baseline performance (2019/20) metrics (see below) to accurately measure progress. • Share metrics with teachers and students and reasons for the tracking. • Continue to increase rigor in instruction and learning.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	Amador County Unified School District, county, cities, teachers, principals, parents
Performance Measurement(s)	<p>Increase in the percentage of the population with a four-year degree</p> <p>Increase in the percentage of higher educational attainment</p> <p>Increase in the CAASP scores</p> <p>Increase in high school graduation rates</p> <p>Increase in the percentage of students taking SAT's</p> <p>Increase/create CTE tracks for target industry sectors</p> <p>Increase in funding for school facilities and technology</p>
Timeline	To be determined.

ACTION 8. FILL THE TALENT PIPELINE

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 2 and 3.</p> <p>To be successful, both new and existing employers need a robust pipeline of educated and skilled workers entering the workforce. Building a strong talent pipeline is a critical factor in a community's ability to compete, prosper, retain existing employers, and be attractive to new companies.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively lead and support the current trend of knowledge-based workers to locate in Amador County by promoting key assets (lower cost of living, small business entrepreneurial support, schools, and amenities). • Develop a website solely dedicated to this action. • Retool and upskill the existing workforce by partnering with local industry and business, MJLT, and local colleges and training providers to identify key skill sets and develop/expand education/training programs to meet the demand.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	Employers and industry associations and organizations (e.g. Amador County Vinters Association, Amador Fire Safe Council, CHIPs, Farm Bureau, etc.), Amador USD, Amador College Connect, Columbia College, San Joaquin Delta College
Performance Measurement(s)	<p>Increase in the labor force participation rate</p> <p>Reduction in the percentage of in-commuters</p> <p>Increase in the skill level (soft and hard) of the resident workforce as evidenced by enrollment and completions in identified demand skill sets and job titles</p> <p>Knowledge-based talent pool attraction website developed</p>
Timeline	To be determined.
Resources	<p>The Six Phases to Building a Strong Talent Pipeline for Your Community</p> <p>Monterey Bay Career Connect</p>

ACTION 9. DEVELOP AND EXPAND CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PATHWAYS

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 2 and 3.</p> <p>Provides students of all ages with the academic and technical skills needed to secure careers and further their education in current and emerging professions.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus CTE pathways on 1) requirements and certifications of target industry sectors and 2) in-demand and emerging occupations and skillsets (forest management, hospitality, healthcare, etc.). • Invest in middle and high school career paths that align with current and projected workforce needs. • Introduce/increase student exposure to local career opportunities (e.g. job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, job, and career fairs/events). • Increase Amador County CTE enrollment and completions in Columbia College and San Joaquin Delta College.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	Amador County Unified School District, community colleges, Amador College Connect, local business and industry, employers, industry associations
Performance Measurement(s)	<p>Increase in the CTE offerings tied to local industry-specific standards, occupations, and careers</p> <p>Increase in the CTE enrollment and completions</p>
Timeline	To be determined.
Resources	<p>Perkins Collaborative Resource Network</p> <p>Calaveras Healthy Impact Products Solutions</p> <p>California Conservation Corps</p> <p>Tuolumne County Biomass Utilization Fund</p>

Business Climate and Competitiveness

ACTION 10. PREPARE THE PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT SITES

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategy 2.</p> <p>As discussed in the Technical Report, Amador County and cities have a limited inventory of fully improved industrial property which is an obstacle to economic growth. Until development-ready land is available, the cities and the county are in a position to lose local business expansions and the attraction of new companies.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an inventory of sites that are planned and zoned commercial and industrial and listed for sale. • Identify the type of business or industry that is the best fit for the property and that would support and complement the area's existing industries. • Work with local developers and business partners to define the real estate and infrastructure requirements for the targeted industry. • Prepare a profile of each available site that documents site specifications, infrastructure in place, needed, and planned, and the timeline for infrastructure improvements. • Post the profiles on the County's "Development Opportunities" page which also hosts the Opportunity Zone prospectus. • Package the sites that are most-ready for marketing. The package should include the profile, photographs, maps showing location and transportation routes, and cost estimates (acquisition, onsite and off-site improvements, development fees).
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	County, cities, developers, commercial/industrial real estate brokers, property owners
Performance Measurement(s)	<p>Market ready profiles of available sites</p> <p>New business locations</p>
Timeline	To be determined.
Resources	Sample site profile (Appendix)

ACTION 11. REVIEW THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS TO ENSURE IT IS EFFICIENT AND BUSINESS-FRIENDLY

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 1 and 2.</p> <p>Successful businesses avoid risk. Competitive communities minimize risk by reducing uncertainty. Local governments can reduce uncertainty by providing clear and concise planning and building procedures.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work hard to ensure local policies and programs foster a competitive business climate. • Review and update where necessary development policies, zoning, and development codes to ensure that they are clear and that processing times and costs are clearly communicated and can be easily presented to prospective businesses. • Compile a development check-list and offer pre-development meetings which can reduce risk, time, and costs. Meetings should include all appropriate regulatory partners, contractors, architects, utility companies, water and wastewater districts, fire departments and districts, etc. • Conduct the necessary research to prove that Amador County costs and development timelines are in line with the region and better than the competition.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	County, cities. jurisdictional department managers, special districts, utilities, communications companies
Performance Measurement(s)	Reduction in permitting-processing time and costs through pre-development meetings and collaboration
Timeline	To be determined.
Resource	Development fee spreadsheet (Appendix)

Physical Infrastructure

ACTION 12. SUPPORT CITY, COUNTY, AND SPECIAL DISTRICT INITIATIVES AND APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING TO DEVELOP CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 1 and 2.</p> <p>Lack of infrastructure capacity limits economic development opportunities and constrains sustainable and equitable communities. The CEDS Technical Report identified over \$400 million in needed capital improvement projects that support industry diversification, employment growth, community safety, health, affordable housing, and economic resiliency.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscribe to www.grants.gov. • Actively pursue funding (loans and grants) for water, wastewater, broadband, roads, pedestrian walkways and connections, public transit, etc. and share any potential resources with all economic development partners. • Combine symbiotic infrastructure projects from multiple agencies (when possible) into funding applications.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	County, cities, special districts, business, industry, community
Performance Measurement(s)	The percent or number of residents and businesses served with enhanced infrastructure (e.g. cleaner water, broadband, municipal wastewater, affordable housing, etc.)
Timeline	To be determined.
Resources	<p>California Grants Portal</p> <p>Caltrans</p> <p>Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)</p> <p>U. S. Department of Agriculture</p>

Equitable and Sustainable Communities

ACTION 13. ACTIVELY PURSUE PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 1 and 2.</p> <p>The lack of affordable housing is severely impacting local employers' ability to attract and retain workers, especially entry-level, lower-wage workers. Limited market-rate housing is also constraining the recruitment and retention of higher-income workers. The 2015 Amador County Joint Housing Element found that "More than half of the very-low and extremely-low-income households in each jurisdiction, in most cases in both owners and renters, were reported to be overpaying for housing. With the exceptions of Amador City and Jackson, over three-quarters of renters were overpaying. Lone had the highest percentage of renters overpaying (83%), while Amador City had the highest percentage of owners overpaying (79%). Overall, 57% of households in Amador County were overpaying in 2011."</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the actions identified in the 2020 Amador Housing Study to increase affordable housing. • Implement the policies and programs identified in the 2015 Amador County Housing Element to increase affordable housing. • Continue to pursue the development of the "Wicklow" property that includes an affordable housing component. • Investigate opportunities for public funding options to partner with the Jackson Rancheria Band of Miwuk Indians on the multi-family apartment complex in Sutter Creek. • Establish baseline performance metrics for very low and extremely low-income households overpaying for housing. Use metrics from the 2015 Housing Element if more recent data is unavailable.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	County, cities, business associations, community leadership groups, Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency, Jackson Rancheria Band of Miwuk Indians
Performance Measurement(s)	Number/percent increase in affordable housing units
Timeline	To be determined.
Resources	<p>Amador County Housing Study 2020</p> <p>Amador County Housing Element</p> <p>Bending the Cost Curve: Solutions to Expand the Supply of Affordable Rentals</p>

ACTION 14. SUPPORT AND COLLABORATE WITH EFFORTS TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 1 and 2.</p> <p>Child care is a critical component of a healthy and resilient economy. Seventy-five percent of the demand for child care is work-related. In Amador County, demand for child care subsidies is higher than supply, resulting in many families being placed on a waitlist.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Amador County Child Care Planning Council's update of the child care needs assessment and strategic plan to document the early care and education needs of children in Amador County. • Provide the Planning Council a copy of the Amador County CEDS. The CEDS could help inform the update of the Planning Council's strategic plan by providing data and direction regarding business and industry targets, targeted economic growth areas, etc. • Support and lead the implementation tasks in the Economic Development/Job Creation and Education and Workforce sections of this CEDS Action Plan that aim to increase employment with higher paying wages and careers.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	Amador Calaveras Child Care Planning Council, Amador-Calaveras Resource and Referral, local governments, businesses, communities
Performance Measurement(s)	Reduction of the number of children on the waitlist for subsidized child care (Baseline 2020: 150 children)
Timeline	To be determined.

ACTION 15. INCREASE WALKABILITY WITHIN AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 1 and 2.</p> <p>Getting people out of the car, and walking and biking is important to good public health, environmental sustainability, and economic development. According to Project for Public Spaces, "When it comes to street life, it seems the presence of people depends on whether the street provides access to the destinations where people want to be, whether or not the street is a comfortable and legible place to be, and also whether there are other people around."</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review planning policies and identify areas for improvements that will increase pedestrian and bicycle access and use; e.g., safe footpaths, sidewalks, bike lanes, buffers to traffic (medians, planters), landscaping, seating, and street and store signage that is both pedestrian- and vehicle-friendly. Signs that mount perpendicular to the wall of the building (blade signs) help pedestrian and auto traffic locate businesses from the sidewalk or street. • Identify potential funding sources.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	Cities, county, Amador County Transportation Commission, CEDS Committee
Performance Measurement(s)	New projects identified, funded
Timeline	To be determined.
Resources	Project for Public Spaces is a nonprofit organization that helps create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities. The website has ideas, resources, and expertise.

Threats to Resiliency

ACTION 16. REDUCE THE THREAT OF WILDFIRE TO AMADOR COUNTY BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS

Rationale	<p>Implements Strategies 1 and 2.</p> <p>On average, each dollar spent on wildfire prevention mitigation saves an average of \$4 in avoided future losses in addition to saving lives and preventing injuries. According to the Amador Fire Safe Council, "Most structural losses occurred where homes had little or no vegetation clearance or were built using combustible building materials and were thus vulnerable to wildfires." It has been said that California does not have a wildfire problem, rather it is a home ignition problem. Modifications to the area known as the "home ignition zone" including home "hardening" and fuel treatments within 100 to 200 feet of homes can make a meaningful difference, which often requires treatment on private land—not on federally managed forests.</p>
Implementation Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise land-use policies and building and fire codes that harden homes to wildfire. • Lead and/or participate with community efforts to take part in state and national programs aimed at making communities resilient against wildfire. • Actively pursue funding through state and federal sources for "home hardening" and wildfire resiliency measures such as forest brush management and strategic fuel breaks.
Lead	To be determined.
Support Team	County, cities, fire departments and districts, Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG), Amador County Fire Safe Council, CAL FIRE
Performance Measurement(s)	<p>Implementation of land use policy and building and fire codes that harden homes to wildfire</p> <p>Increase in the number of "hardened homes" in Amador County</p> <p>Increase in public and private funding that supports efforts to plan for and mitigate the threat of wildfire (e.g. AB 38)</p> <p>Increase in Amador County communities that actively embrace and participate in building sustainable wildfire resilience capacity in their community</p>
Timeline	To be determined.
Resources	<p>City of Paradise Greenbelt</p> <p>Lake Valley Fire Protection District (South Lake Tahoe), wood roof replacement project</p> <p>Firewise USA</p> <p>Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire</p> <p>Fire Adapted Communities</p> <p>State of Oregon Defensible Space Law</p>

CEDS Management and Coordination

Efficiently moving this Action Plan forward to ultimately realize the goals requires a team of dedicated staff and volunteers. The following management and coordination tasks are led primarily by the County and supported by each of the implementation partners noted in the Action Plan.

- Launch the plan by following the 30-60-90 day Implementation Schedule which is provided in the next section.
- Establish regularly scheduled check-ins with the CEDS committee and each lead organization or individual.
- Establish and monitor baseline performance metrics.
- Continue community engagement. Consider a new section on the county's website to keep the public and partners informed on the progress of the strategies and tactics. Generate interest and excitement, celebrate successes, recognize accomplishments, commitment, volunteers, and community spirit.
- Schedule time to collect data and information for the CEDS annual report (performance measures, action items accomplished, new projects, confirm or revise goals and strategies).

Launch Plan

The following matrix is intended to provide the CEDS Committee and staff with direction on getting started with the many actions and implementation tasks.

Table 2. CEDS 30 - 60 - 90 Day Launch Plan

TASK	LEAD	30	60	90
Prioritize: Identify those Action Items to be started during Year 1.	CEDS Committee, County, Cities Staff	✓		
Confirm Roles and Responsibilities: Contact and confirm each Team Lead and supporting partners for Year 1 Actions.	County Staff with CEDS Committee support	✓	✓	
Schedule: Prepare the Implementation Schedule (next page).	County		✓	
Measure Performance: Prepare to accurately measure progress by documenting the baseline (2019-20 or most recent available) performance metrics for each Year 1 action.	To be determined			✓

Implementation Schedule

	TEAM LEAD	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION						
1. Establish a collaborative business visitation program						
2. Support entrepreneurs						
3. Build a countywide e-commerce website						
4. Create an investment prospectus for the Opportunity Zone						
5. Enhance the visitor experience						
6. Attract traded-sector businesses that support and complement the existing industries in Amador County						
EDUCATION AND TALENT SUPPLY						
7. Strengthen academic performance						
8. Fill the talent pipeline						
9. Develop and expand career technical education pathways						
BUSINESS CLIMATE AND COMPETITIVENESS						
10. Prepare the priority development sites						
11. Review the development process to ensure it is efficient and business-friendly						
PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE						
12. Support city, county, and special districts' initiatives and applications for funding to develop critical infrastructure						
EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES						
13. Actively pursue public/private partnerships and funding to increase affordable housing options						

	TEAM LEAD	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
14. Support and collaborate with efforts to increase affordable child care						
15. Increase walkability within and connections between communities and employment centers						
THREATS TO RESILIENCY						
16. Reduce the threat of wildfire to Amador County businesses and residents						

Performance Evaluation

The performance metrics are designed to measure the *impact* of activities, it is not intended to be an implementation checklist. The performance metrics are listed below with the related Action Item(s). As baseline data is gathered, data sources and dates will be noted to ensure consistency and integrity in the data year after year.

ACTION ITEM(S)	PERFORMANCE METRIC (AND SOURCE)
1	Building vacancy rate (to be determined)
1, 10	Business locations, new (County, City new business licenses issued)
6	Business locations, traded sector (County, City business licenses issued by industry)
1	Local business expansions (County, Cities)
1	Number of businesses assisted, issues resolved (to be determined)
2	Small business startups (new business licenses issued sorted by the number of employees)
2, 3, 5	Website analytics (Resources & Tools, e-commerce website, chamber, Visit Amador)
3, 5	Sales tax revenue (County, Cities)
4	Investment in the Amador Opportunity Zone (County)
4	Employment in the Amador Opportunity Zone (County)
5	Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue (County, Cities)
5	Visitor amenities added (County, Cities)
6	Infrastructure improvements, value (County, Cities, Special Districts)
6	Inquiries of opportunity sites (County and Cities)
7	Share of the population with a four-year degree (US Census ACS Table: S1501)
7	Share of the population with higher educational attainment (US Census ACS Table: S1501)
7	CAASP scores (Amador County Unified School District)
7	High school graduation rate (Amador County Unified School District)
7	Percentage of students taking SAT's (Amador County Unified School District)
7	Number of career technical education tracks for target industry sectors (Amador County Unified School District, community colleges, Mother Lode Job Training, Amador Connect)
7	Funding for school facilities and technology (Amador County Unified School District)
8	Labor force participation rate (U.S. Census, ACS Table DP03)
8	Number of commuters into Amador County (US Census Bureau, On the Map)
8	Enrollment in identified demand skill sets and job titles (Amador County Unified School District, Community Colleges, Mother Lode Job Training, Amador Connect)

ACTION ITEM(S)	PERFORMANCE METRIC (AND SOURCE)
8, 9	Completions in identified demand skill sets and job titles (Amador County Unified School District, Community Colleges, Mother Lode Job Training, Amador Connect)
8	Knowledge-based talent pool attraction website developed (to be determined)
10	Market ready profiles of available sites (to be determined)
11	A review conducted and changes made as necessary to reduce permitting time and cost
12	Number of residents and businesses served with enhanced infrastructure (County, Cities)
13	Number of affordable housing units
14	Number of children on the waitlist for subsidized child care (to be determined)
15	Walkability projects identified (County, Cities)
15	Walkability projects funded, number and value (County, Cities)
16	Number of "hardened homes" in Amador County (County, Cities, Fire Districts)
16	Public and private funding for planning and mitigating the threat of wildfire (County, Cities)
16	Number and value of participation in wildfire resiliency projects (County, Cities)

Public Engagement

Amador County CEDS Committee

The CEDS Steering Committee includes representatives from the Amador County Community Development Department and two members of the County Board of Supervisors. The Amador County CEDS Committee consists of the 24 public and private representatives listed below. The CEDS Committee participated in the development of strategies and are committed to its implementation. The committee continues to meet on an as-needed basis to monitor strategy implementation, accomplishments, and ensure there is a well-coordinated and well-informed local governments.

REPRESENTING PUBLIC SECTOR (46 PERCENT)

Local Government

Frank Axe
Amador County District 4 Supervisor

Pat Crew
Amador County District 1 Supervisor

Chuck Iley
Amador County, CAO

Jon Hopkins
Amador County General Services Director

Kim Holland
Amador County Sr. Administrative Analyst

Stephanie Hess
Amador County Ethnic Services Manager

Yvonne Kimball
City of Jackson City Manager

Jon Hanken
City of Lone City Manager

Amy Gedney
City of Sutter Creek City Manager

David Groth
City of Amador Mayor

Rex J. Osborn
City of Plymouth City Manager

REPRESENTING PRIVATE SECTOR (54 PERCENT)

Business and Industry

Jamie Armstrong, Chamber of Commerce

Lucy Hackett, Jackson Main Street Association

Jack Gorman, Amador Vintners Association

Wayne Garibaldi, American River Bank

Ed Struffenegger, Forester

Sally Bligh, Amador Association of Realtors

Tourism

Melissa Haines Lavin, Amador Council of Tourism
Workforce Development

David Thoeny, Mother Load Job Training

Education

Scott Oneto
University of California Cooperative Extension

Frank Leschinsky
Volcano Communications Group

Transportation and Utilities

John Gedney, Amador Transportation
Commission

Miwuk Indian Tribe

Robert Dalton, Tribal Council Member

Crystal Jack, Jackson Rancheria, CEO

CEDS Process

Due to the COVID-19 sheltering in place and social distancing policies the Amador County CEDS Committee meetings were held via a combination of in-person and Zoom. Committee meetings were held on August 17, October 8, October 15, and November 13.

The final Amador County CEDS was presented to and accepted by the Committee on November 13. The staff was directed to publish the document for a 30-day public review before the public hearing. To give the Amador County Board of Supervisors sufficient time to review, they were provided a draft copy of the final CEDS the week of November 17.

On December 15, 2020 the CEDS was presented to and adopted by the Amador County Board of Supervisors. The resolution accepting the Amador County CEDS is included in the Appendix.

The County and its incorporated cities are committed to continuing efforts to improve the business climate, job creation, skills development, quality of life, and fiscal stability for their respective jurisdictions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Development of the CEDS involved extensive outreach to local and regional partners as well as a comprehensive review of current and relevant documents and reports. The list of community stakeholders interviewed and relevant documents and reports reviewed are included in the Appendix.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT ONLINE

To further engage the public and adhere to social distancing policies, a [digital engagement platform](#) was created for Amador County using the Social Pinpoint app as a way for residents, visitors, and businesses to share ideas. The site contained a welcome message from Mr. Pat Crew, Chair of the Amador County Board of Supervisors. The site was launched on August 5, 2020.



Figure 1. Amador County Social Engagement Online

The site contained two surveys, one for residents and one specifically for business owners and managers. An interactive map showcased the priority development sites in the county and invited stakeholders to share their ideas and concerns. Results of the two surveys (190 responses) and map comments (79) are included in the Appendix.

Figure 3. Access to Surveys and Interactive Map

Help create the Amador County Economic Development Plan



Share Your Ideas!

Learn about the areas identified as development priorities by the Cities and County of Amador. Share your thoughts about the best uses for these areas and the types of businesses and employment opportunities that would be welcome.

Give us your Ideas



Business Owners and Managers

Please give us your thoughts on economic development in Amador County and the impact COVID-19 has on your business. If you are a resident of Amador County, take the Resident Survey as well. The information you provide is confidential and will help us better understand your business success and challenges.

Take The Survey



Amador Residents and Workers

Please take a moment to also share your thoughts and experiences of living and working in Amador County. All members of the household age 18 and over are invited to respond to the survey. The information you provide is confidential and will help us understand your employment needs.

Take The Survey

Figure 3. Interactive Map

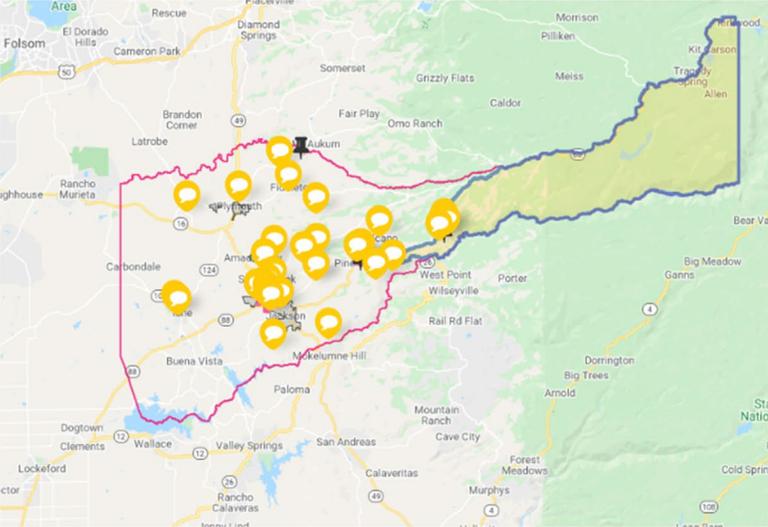
Amador County Development Opportunities

The County and Cities of Amador County have dedicated a great deal of time to identify priority development areas throughout the county. These sites will be the focus of economic development efforts, infrastructure investment, and business development activities.

There are four principal development areas in the unincorporated portions of Amador County that offer opportunities for industrial and commercial growth. These areas represent the County's greatest opportunity for business and employment growth.

Click the titles on the sidebar to the left and take a moment to learn about these areas and each of the cities' priority development areas.

If you would like to make a comment or ask a question about these development sites, just click on the icon at the top and drag it to the map. A dialogue box will open. Leave your comment or question and click "Add Comment" at the bottom.



The use of the Social Engagement Site was promoted throughout the county using a variety of methods.

MEDIA

Supervisor Richard Forster and Jamie Armstrong, the Amador County Chamber of Commerce's executive director, participated in radio interviews on two separate occasions—August 28 and September 4, 2020. *Talk on KVCG Radio 1340 AM and 96.5 FM* is broadcast live every Friday from Harrah's Northern California and is simulcast live on Facebook. The show averages 1,000 Facebook views.

PROMOTIONAL FLYER

The Chamber created an attractive electronic flyer to promote participation. The flyer was designed along the theme of the social engagement website (Figure 4).

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

The Amador County Chamber of Commerce has an email database of 754 business and community members. The Chamber sent out the first email blast on Thursday, August 27 at 12:57 PM. This first email had an open rate of 30 percent and a click-through rate of 22 percent. Emails were subsequently sent on Wednesday, September 2, and Monday, September 8.

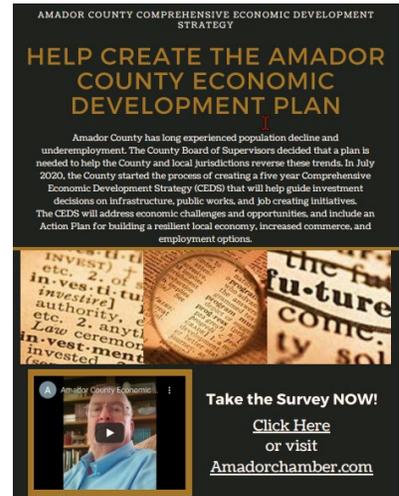


Figure 4. CEDS promotional flyer

FACEBOOK

The Chamber also posted on its Facebook the flyer and active links to take the surveys, tagging several entities to make the content easy to share. The post reached 76 people.

WEBSITE

Amador County included a hyperlink on its homepage news section. The Chamber posted the survey information, links, and details on its homepage making it easy for anyone to access.

PARTNERS

The CEDS flyer and survey details were emailed directly to the Amador Vintners Association and the Amador Council of Tourism to share with their members.



Figure 5. Amador County Chamber of Commerce Homepage

Appendix

- A. Technical Report
- B. Public Engagement: Interviews Conducted, Survey Results, Map Comments
- C. Site Visit Tips and Ideal Proposal Outline
- D. Sample Site Profile
- E. Sample Development Fee Spreadsheet
- F. Amador County Board of Supervisors Resolution
- G. Background Reports