



The *Business Alliance...Update* is a bi-monthly publication of the El Dorado Business Alliance (BA). The BA is made up of the following organizations: El Dorado Builders' Exchange, El Dorado County Association of Realtors (EDCAR), El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce, North State Building Industry Association (NSBIA) and Shingle Springs-Cameron Park Chamber of Commerce. Web Address for Subscription Info: KathyeRussell@gmail.com

"Developing Mutual Support on Community-Wide Issues"

WHAT IS EDAC: WHAT IS THE COUNTY VISION? WHO IS "IN CHARGE" ?

There exists some confusion, and recent questions asked, seeking information of a variety of organizations and programs now under discussion in El Dorado County (EDC). For those new to current efforts and reporting in this newsletter, we address a few pertinent issues here and offer ways to get involved. To fully understand current efforts regarding economic development, local land use and community development, we recommend going to the county's Land Use Policy Programmatic Update (LUPPU) website @ <http://www.edcgov.us/landuseupdate>

Q: "I keep hearing about El Dorado County's (EDC) vision – what is it?"

A: The "vision" referred to in the Board of Supervisors' (BOS) meeting where this question was asked is found in the 2004 General Plan – an adopted 400+-page *"Plan for Managed Growth and Open Roads: A Plan for Quality Neighborhoods and Traffic Relief"*. State planning law requires a legally adequate general plan that sets forth EDC's long-range direction and policies for the use of land within the county. Following years in development, years of public input, surviving a legal challenge and ultimately ratified by a majority of county voters, the plan provides methods for addressing issues of the greatest local concern, including economic development, housing, transportation, public services and agriculture. It also provides a basis for rational decision making regarding long-term physical development. There is a *Statement of Vision* found on page 3, but to fully comprehend how all chapters work together requires a full reading of most, if not all, nine elements.

Q: "What is "EDAC" and "Regulatory Reform" and what's the difference?"

A: In this context "EDAC" stands for the EDC Economic Development Advisory Committee (not to be confused with the other group sharing this acronym, the El Dorado Arts Council). EDAC was created in response to policy direction found in the General Plan (GP) on page 348, Objective 10.1.1. EDAC is the *"recognized economic development organization to advise and recommend...policies and a course of action..."* EDAC is comprised of 11 volunteers appointed by the BOS to advise them regarding policies, project approvals, and courses of action designed to facilitate sustainable economic growth. As a standing county committee the group complies with Brown Act and public meeting requirements governing California.

Regulatory Reform is an ad hoc sub-committee of EDAC, a working group of volunteers that seeks to unravel the policies reported to be detrimental to local economic growth. These volunteers morphed into a variety of "working groups" that self-organized and volunteer to research problems, provide reports, suggest solutions and make recommendations for appropriate change, to the full EDAC and/or Board of Supervisors. Reg Reform meets each Friday morning in the county's Building C TAC room, in order to seek and engage community input. Various working groups come and go as needed, and report on their activities at this Friday morning meeting.

Q: "Who's in charge of these groups?"

A: EDAC is supported by the County Administrative Office (CAO) who provides technical support as required. The "agenda" is set by the 11-member committee and accommodates community requests for presentation of issues and/or projects. Regulatory Reform regularly reports on issues to the full EDAC.

As an ad hoc collection of volunteers, Regulatory Reform has no official members: all interested parties and members of the public are welcome and encouraged to attend. The agenda is established as needed (often based on upcoming Board of Supervisors' meeting agendas), and as working groups provide input and/or public requests dictate. To receive notices of meeting schedules, send your email address to: economic.development@edcgov.us

FUNDING COMMUNITIES' ECONOMIC GOALS

Last issue we reported on the needs of existing and new local businesses that would benefit from a countywide effort to fund a variety of community promotional/marketing needs. Those needs include numerous programs such as supporting local volunteers who already bring tourists and tax dollars to this area, such as recreation, festivals, wineries and Apple Hill.

One idea presented that would benefit the entire county was the establishment of a countywide website (portal) to direct online visitors to all existing events, farms, vineyards, festivals, wineries, etc, as well as to all kinds of local businesses. Another idea cited by a local resident was to seek funds for a feasibility study of historic sites ripe for preservation as tourist draws, including museums and local historic sites promoting the discovery of gold (we are the place where California really began!).

Another program that is gaining traction from individuals in the community is the need to find funding for a feasibility study on the development of broadband within the county.

The county is also encouraging local areas/communities in bringing together “stakeholders” within those areas for the purpose of creating community identification for each. Needs for this effort includes potential funding for an unbiased facilitator to seek and report on stakeholders’ opinions and could include development of design standards and building designs as examples of what each community wants to see built in their area.

The needs are endless and the costs could be as well. However, another concept being floated to county leaders is that of taking some portion of the county’s promotional funds (collected locally as the “transit occupancy tax” [TOT]) and using it as seed money to seek private and/or government grants, as appropriate, thereby parlaying it into more money to support local projects. Those who have researched this possibility have uncovered a plethora of funding that has been awarded to a variety of counties and communities for exactly just such programs.

For example, a short compilation of representative Grants available in support of community development include the following:

- Broadband: Nevada County was awarded \$2.5 million for this very effort in 2012;
- History Museum: San Joaquin was awarded \$2.5 million in 2012;
- California State Parks: Recreation Trails Fund will be awarding grants in 2013;
- El Dorado Winery Association was awarded \$179,000 by the USDA in 2011;
- Mammoth Lakes was awarded \$318,000 for their local Zoning Ordinance;
- Yreka was awarded \$70,000 for a biomass feasibility study;
- Gridley was awarded \$445,500 to develop their Zoning Code, development standards and various studies;
- Colusa County was awarded \$5 million to support a local mushroom plant;
- Weed was awarded \$500,000 for block grant for economic development;
- In 2012 **\$42.8+ million went to 54 cities and counties** (Amador Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Lassen, Mariposa, Mendocino, Mono, Monterey, Plumas, San Benito, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Siskiyou, Solano, Tuolumne, Tuolumne and Yuba) **for community economic development** (per CDBG program stats).

In addition to the specific projects noted above, researchers reported that **Placer County**, which also has a Transit Occupancy Tax, **parlayed \$ 30 million over the past 15 years, to secure matching grant funds from state, federal, county and local sources, to generate another \$160 million in support of public improvement projects.** Those projects included bike trails, parks, lakeshore improvements and museums, in addition to creating local jobs and promotion of the community. That is an example we can learn from.

EDC Supervisors recently heard of numerous programs other jurisdictions were using in support of local community development efforts: San Diego County annually grants \$2.5 million of their TOT funds to approximately 250 different community groups in the form of Community Enhancement Program District Awards. Recipients include groups such as historical, social, trails, parks, Chamber of Commerce and art groups, among many others.

The City of San Luis Obispo grants about \$100,000 annually of their TOT fund to local groups that promote and benefit the community. The 21 recipients of the 2012-13 awards ranged from a low of \$800 to a high of \$10,000 with an average of \$4,100 per grant.

The City of San Jose totaled \$4,240,136 in TOT fund grants for “cultural development” to about 100 recipients. And closer to home, Jackson grants \$1,500 or more of TOT funds to businesses within the city that *“improve the appearance of individual building facades, signs and awnings, as well as for the overall look of the surrounding area.”* These funds are matched by the property’s owner.

Finally, Sonoma County revised their TOT grant policy in 2012-13 so funds are now made available *“for the promotional activities of private nonprofit organizations ...whose purposes are to provide cultural, historical preservation and other activities which enhance tourism and industry, and/or local community events which encourage a sense of community. Matching funds are also available for un-incorporated Chambers of Commerce.”* Uses of the fund for 2012-13 indicate around 40 recipients for agriculture promotion, historical efforts, parks, arts, Chambers, and fire protection, among others.

After reviewing this information – which is only a small sampling of grant and TOT fund uses in California, it’s clear to this writer that the question is not whether or not El Dorado County can adopt similar programs to promote local economic growth – but rather: why haven’t we already done so? Clearly private and government grant programs were created to address the very needs that our communities are identifying now. An initial investment that seeks a share of available grants for this area is simply a “no brainer”!!

It is the hope of many individuals who are working together and as volunteers on behalf of local community development efforts, that El Dorado County can come together and help each other in qualifying for funds available to *all* communities throughout the state.