

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Economic Development Element will consist of countywide policies and community-specific strategies and action plans. The countywide policies are undergoing public review. The attached community-specific action plans and strategies for Bridgeport and Antelope Valley were adopted December 2002.

## **ANTELOPE VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

### **.010 Introduction**

A series of meetings was held throughout Mono County in the summer of 1999 to identify a list of community-based needs and goals. These studies, conducted by Mono County and facilitated by the consulting firm of Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates of San Francisco, sought to solicit input from residents and business owners concerning the future of their communities.

The Antelope Valley region of Mono County, one of the communities that took part in the facilitated studies, identified a variety of issues, problems, concerns and actions that would address its perceived and real needs to make the community economically successful. The study provided a blueprint for the Antelope Valley Regional Planning Advisory Committee (RPAC), the Mono County Collaborative Planning Team, and Mono County staff to develop a comprehensive Community Action Plan to implement and sustain the goals and objectives of the community.

In the fall of 2000, the United States Forest Service (USFS), Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, provided a grant of nearly \$5,000 to help produce the Community Action Plan. The plan would establish a blueprint for future grant funding related to economic and community development in the region.

The following goals articulate the major milestones that must be accomplished to support the envisioned future of the Antelope Valley. Each goal has objectives that need to be accomplished incrementally or in concert in order for the goal to be reached.

This action plan is a living document. It will be modified as goals are reached, new needs are identified, or contingencies preclude the accomplishment of goals or objectives.

### **.020 Issues**

- A. The Antelope Valley region of northern Mono County is rural in nature, and is comprised of the communities of Walker, Coleville and Topaz. The economy of the area is dependent upon tourism and agriculture. Recreational opportunities abound, but have not been well publicized in the past. Those opportunities include fishing, hunting, camping, river rafting and kayaking, hiking, biking and sightseeing. The Antelope Valley is a predominantly summer-oriented destination as those activities would suggest, but opportunities for year-round recreational activities should be considered. Additional fish stocking, and a request to extend the fishing season have been recommended.
- B. While opportunities exist to expand Antelope Valley's recreational amenities, the community has repeatedly pointed out that it does not want to jeopardize the area's rich rural and agricultural legacy in the name of economic and community development. Open space is a priority in the community, and it has been made clear that any plan that is developed would take that priority into consideration.
- C. Antelope Valley, as a small mountain resort area, has an economy dependent upon tourism dollars, and subsequently, provides relatively low-

paying service industry jobs. Many of the residents commute across the border into Nevada to seek employment in Douglas County. Most residents do their shopping in Douglas County. Bridgeport, the county seat of Mono, also receives a large number of its workforce from the Antelope Valley area.

- D. Enhancing the Valley's economic foundation will depend on expanding and improving tourist-oriented recreational facilities and accommodations. After the devastating flood of 1997, one major campground in the Walker River Canyon that operated at full or near-full capacity was destroyed and was turned into a day-use area. There are two other USFS-run campgrounds in the Walker Canyon, one of which does not operate at full capacity due to the lack of river camping. The loss of the campground is perceived as a major detriment to the economic success of the Antelope Valley area. Recently, the USFS has agreed to conduct a "test case" allowing visitors to extend their stay in campgrounds from the traditional 14 days, to 30 days.
- E. After the flood of 1997, Mono County purchased private property along the Walker River. Currently, discussions are being held concerning appropriate use of this property. The community has identified several recreational uses of this property including handicapped fishing access areas, campground facilities, interpretive sites describing the natural environment, and others.
- F. Antelope Valley does not have a Visitor/Tourist Center. The nearest center is located at the Bridgeport Ranger District offices near the town of Bridgeport, 45 minutes south of Walker. Another visitor center is located near Lee Vining, more than an hour south. Neither of these centers really addresses the needs of the Antelope Valley area. There are two Scenic Byway Kiosks in the area, one near the junction of Highway 395 and State Route 89, near the Nevada border. The other is located in Walker Canyon, adjacent to the river. This is a day-use-only picnic area. Restrooms are available at each of these locations, and interpretive displays describe aspects of the Antelope Valley environment.<sup>1</sup> The community would like to see more restroom facilities in the area, and improved maintenance of existing facilities.
- G. The community's prime interest is maintaining large lots and limiting the subdivision of existing lots. The land policy within the Mono County General Plan is to "provide for limited development that is compatible with natural constraints and the Valley's scenic qualities" and to "retain the existing privately held land base in the Antelope Valley." Because much of the land in the Antelope Valley is privately owned, there are few concerns about land swaps within the USFS and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Nearby public lands may provide potential opportunities for strengthening the economic base of the community.
- H. Communication, or lack of communication, has been an ongoing frustration in the community. Recently, the Sierra Scoop has provided information in the region, but is published monthly, making it sometimes difficult for the publication to disseminate timely information. The Antelope Valley Information System (AVIS), a local AM transmitter, broadcasts in the area and provides community information. Also, Internet websites have been established to provide information. There is no Mono County newspaper of record distributed in the Antelope Valley. This makes it difficult for residents to keep abreast of the goings-on in the rest of the county. A new publication,

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson/Nygaard Facilitated Planning Process Final Report, October 2000

the Northern Voice, is also being published monthly, and contains county news.

- I. Developing a sense of community has been identified as a priority in the Antelope Valley. To that end, the community has formed the Northern Mono County Chamber of Commerce, including an information phone number. It has also produced a brochure featuring a map and information about the area.
- J. Student and youth programs are vital to the sustainability of the area as a family-oriented community.
- K. Crime control has become a priority in the region. Community members have established a Neighborhood Watch program.
- L. Maintaining and enhancing local community services, most notably retaining paramedic services, are a priority in the Antelope Valley region.
- M. Transportation concerns center around U.S. Highway 395, which has a tremendous impact on the communities of the Antelope Valley. The highway is a vital connection between Walker, Coleville and Topaz, as well as to the rest of the county and to Nevada. The community wants to maintain the Scenic Highway designation it enjoys, but wants to explore ways to slow down traffic, including traffic-calming measures. These measures would need to be implemented with the support of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). Such measures would also need to address snow removal issues, maintain highway capacity and allow for the safe and efficient movement of freight and other vehicles along this key artery.
- N. Related transportation issues include public information concerning road closures affecting traffic in the area. It has been suggested that the existing traffic information sign now located near the California Nevada border near Topaz Lake be moved farther south, near the mouth of Walker Canyon. This would, as suggested, enable visitors and residents to be better informed about road conditions and allow traveling motorists to stop in Antelope Valley for supplies or an overnight stay. Currently, motorists may be unaware that services are available in the Walker area.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Nelson/Nygaard, October 2000

**.030 POLICIES**

**GOAL**

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**Expand and strengthen Antelope Valley's tourism-oriented economy by stimulating the development of increased recreational facilities and attracting and retaining a diversity of businesses, while protecting the area's scenic, agricultural and natural resource values.**

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**OBJECTIVE A**

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Expand and diversify Antelope Valley's tourist base to provide for the needs of multiple user groups, while maintaining the valley's character and protecting its scenic and natural resources.

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**Policy 1:** Outdoor recreation programs should utilize the valley's natural scenic resources by focusing on, to the extent practical, the valley's unique attributes such as the Walker River, hiking and biking trails, scenic beauty, and open-space areas. New recreational activities should provide experiences not found in metropolitan areas.

Action 1.1: The Antelope Valley community should work with the USFS, BLM and Mono County in a joint effort to expand camping and recreational facilities in the valley, especially near the Walker River.

Action 1.2: The Antelope Valley Community should form a Northern Mono County Chamber of Commerce and, working in conjunction with the Mono County Tourism Commission, and Mono County Economic Development, expand its marketing and job creation efforts.

Action 1.3: The community should work closely with existing visitor centers in the region, expanding its distribution of literature and information about the Antelope Valley area.

Action 1.4: The community should work with USFS, BLM, Caltrans, Mono County and the Native American community, among others, to create its own visitor information facility in order to retain visitors to the region.

**Policy 2** Encourage local agencies to create and expand campgrounds and other recreational facilities.

Action 2.1 Work with Mono County to create recreational access to the Walker River on county-owned property.

Action 2.2 Work with the USFS to extend the limit on campground stays.

Action 2.3 Work with the USFS and Mono County to provide handicapped access to fishing, sightseeing, photographic and other recreational opportunities.

**Policy 3:** Expand and protect fishing opportunities in the Antelope Valley area.

Action 3.1: Work with the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), the BLM, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other agencies and private

organizations to ensure the fisheries in the Antelope Valley area are protected and maintained for the health and vitality of the economy of the area.

Action 3.2: Expand, through the DFG, and private businesses based in Mono County, responsible and compatible, fish stocking in the area.

Action 3.3: Work with local landowners and the DFG to provide access to fishing opportunities.

Action 3.4: Work to develop fishing education programs aimed at youth and newcomers to the fishing experience.

**GOAL**

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**Maintain and enhance the existing quality of life within the community with regard to community services and recreational opportunities.**

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**OBJECTIVE B**

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Maintain existing health and safety services within the Antelope Valley.

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**Policy 1:** Ensure paramedic, fire protection, and public safety services are maintained and supported in the Antelope Valley area.

Action 1.1: Work with Mono County, the USFS, the BLM, the United States Marine Corps and other agencies to ensure health and safety protection is available in a timely manner.

Action 1.2: Work with and provide support for the partnership with the Toiyabe Indian Health Project medical services clinic.

Action 1.3: Work with local law enforcement to create and maintain a Neighborhood Watch Program.

**GOAL**

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**Develop a sense of community in the Antelope Valley region by limiting development and preserving the area's rural environment, and seek new employment opportunities for the area's residents**

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**OBJECTIVE C**

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Through collaborative efforts with Mono County through its General Plan updating process, the Eastern Sierra Unified School District, Mono County Social Services, and other agencies maintain Antelope Valley's rural nature while expanding its economic and educational base.

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**Policy 1:** Keep the rural environment by maintaining large lots and keeping the rural design of the community.

Action 1.1: Work with Mono County Community Development Department to ensure development is "clustered" in the Antelope Valley area.

Action 1.2: Work with the USFS and BLM to ensure protection of the land while encouraging new opportunities for recreational uses.

Action 1.3: Open new channels of communication with the BLM and USFS by working more closely with representatives and knowing whom to contact as the first line of communication for land use and recreation decisions.

**Policy 2:** Maintain a “family” atmosphere, keeping the communities of Antelope Valley a good place to raise families.

Action 2.1: Find new recreational opportunities for youth, such as a year-round youth center and programs, a skateboard park and/or public swimming pool.

Action 2.2: Seek new employment opportunities for young people.

Action 2.3: Encourage development that is welcoming for families.

## **GOAL**

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**Preserve and enhance community character through transportation infrastructure and information improvements.**

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## **OBJECTIVE D**

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While recognizing its role as a vital transportation link to and through the Antelope Valley, maintain and promote its Scenic Highway designation and explore ways to slow traffic to create more visitor interest in the community.

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**Policy 1:** Highway 395 serves as a main thoroughfare through the Antelope Valley and a main street. A balance should be maintained.

Action 1.1: Aggressively work with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and Mono County to create traffic-calming measures.

Action 1.2: Work with Caltrans and Mono County to create and maintain rest stops and turnouts in the Antelope Valley area, especially in the community of Walker.

**Policy 2:** Road and traveler information should be expanded in the Antelope Valley area.

Action 2.1 Encourage Caltrans to relocate its traffic information sign to the mouth of Walker Canyon, just south of the community of Walker.

Action 2.3 Work with Mono County, Caltrans and the Coalition for Unified Recreation in the Sierra (CURES), to increase informational signage in the area.

Action 2.3 Work to include information about Antelope Valley on road maps produced both locally and regionally.

**Policy 3:** Encourage the earliest opening and latest closing, weather and safety conditions permitting, of Tioga, Sonora and Monitor passes.

Action 3.1: Work with other Mono County and westside communities to help lobby for the expedient opening of the passes.

Action 3.2: Work with Caltrans, the National Park Service and other agencies to promote the opening of the passes to encourage visitation to the Antelope Valley region.

**OBJECTIVE E**

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**Improve communications in the Antelope Valley**

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**Policy 1:** Promote efforts to expand existing media in the region and support efforts to encourage more interest from outside media organizations.

Action 1.1: Work with the Eastern Sierra Times newspaper to expand its news coverage and distribution to the Antelope Valley area.

Action 1.2: Support through advertising, news releases and public announcements, the Sierra Scoop, the Northern Voice and AVIS radio.

Action 1.3: Seek grants for enhanced communications efforts in the Antelope Valley.

## **BRIDGEPORT DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

### **.010 Introduction.**

In the summer of 2002, the Bridgeport Development Corporation was formed to address economic development issues in Bridgeport and the northern regions of Mono County. The corporation drafted an economic development strategy in July 2002. That strategy was presented to the Community Development Department for review and submittal to the Mono County Planning Commission.

In September 2002, the corporation, aided by funding from the Community Development Department, enlisted the services of the California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED) to review the strategy and make recommendations to the corporation and staff. CALED representatives reported the association's findings, along with recommendations, to the Mono County Board of Supervisors.

In October 2002, the Planning Commission reviewed the Bridgeport Development Corporation strategy, and in December 2002, the Board of Supervisors adopted the strategy as part of the overall Economic Development Element of the Mono County General Plan.

### **.020 Purpose.**

Mono County has prepared and approved a "Job Creation Plan" to assist in solving the problems facing the entire county. The county Community Development Department is currently preparing an economic development plan for all of Mono County. However, since Bridgeport and other northern communities are unincorporated, there is no governmental agency focusing specifically on the economic development of the Bridgeport area. Therefore, Bridgeport Development Corporation has been formed as a "nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation" to address the problem of the declining economy of the northern portion of Mono County.

### **.030 Tax Status.**

Bridgeport Development Corporation has been granted 501 C (3) tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service and the California Franchise Tax Board.

### **.040 Community Support.**

It is important to this planned economic development program that the entire community support the plans, policies and proposed activities of Bridgeport Development Corporation. This report was originally prepared to solicit the endorsement of the Chamber of Commerce and the Bridgeport Regional Planning Advisory Committee, and received unanimous support and approval.

The proposed activities of the Bridgeport Development Corporation are as follows:

1. Financial assistance for nonprofit organizations and government agencies to:
  - A. Develop a Main Street program for the communities in the northern part of Mono County (Bridgeport, Walker, Lee Vining, June Lake). Expected result: Revitalization of main street business and increase in the area's tourism; and

- B. Create a financing program to assist in the implementation of a 24/7 urgent-care medical facility in Bridgeport. Expected result: Reestablish a quality health facility for Bridgeport area residents and tourists; and
  - C. Preserve the fishery natural resource, including raising and stocking trout. Expected result: Increase the number of sportsmen and women tourists visiting Mono County; and
  - D. Develop a network of bike trails in the Bridgeport Valley and surrounding mountains that may interconnect with existing trails in the south county. Expected result: Increase recreational opportunities in the north county for residents and tourists; and
  - E. Establish a public-service radio station in Bridgeport to provide weather, highway and area historic information for residents and tourists. Expected result: Reduction in winter highway accidents, and increased public awareness of area attractions and activities; and
  - F. Purchase and maintain a van to move passengers from Bridgeport to the Yosemite bus transportation system at Lee Vining. Expected result: Increase overnight guest occupancy and resulting Transient Occupancy Tax at area motels during the summer season when mountain pass roads are open to Yosemite; and
  - G. Maintain existing roads on land managed by the USFS and BLM. Expected result: Maintain access to public land for residents and tourists; and
  - H. Establish area festivals, fairs and other events that will create job opportunities and an increase in tourism. Expected result: Growth in tourist revenue and tax receipts; and
  - I. Establish sister city program for area schools. Expected result: Increase in knowledge and experience of our school children, and growth in tourism from European countries; and
  - J. Identify other projects that will serve to develop the local public welfare and economy.
2. Investment in public infrastructure and enhancement of community aesthetics. Each of the projects delineated below will be studies beginning in 2002 and will be scheduled for further development as funding sources are identified.
    - A. Provide access to less-expensive electric power source.
    - B. Remove abandoned equipment, signs and obsolete structures from town streets and walkways.
    - C. Develop low-cost resident housing to provide for employment growth.
  3. Development of a comprehensive marketing plan for the Bridgeport area and certain portions of the north county that will provide a coordinated approach with government agencies and interested private developers for the economic development of Bridgeport. This project will begin in 2002 and will result in a workable plan and the identification of major funding sources by the end of 2003.

**.050 Conclusion.**

The above outline does not reflect all the ideas that will ultimately identify projects to be undertaken by Bridgeport Development Corporation. New projects will be added as ideas and plans are made and projects are financed, developed and implemented. This economic development entity will be directed and managed by local residents and will involve the collaboration of public and private organizations. The legal filings, tax rulings, and financial and other records of Bridgeport Development Corporation are available for public inspection.