

City of Rocklin
DRAFT Economic Development Strategy
2022-2025

I. Vision

The City of Rocklin’s vision statement is to ensure that Rocklin provides its citizens with exceptional quality of life while maintaining its small-town sense of community. The goal of the economic development strategy is to support that quality of life enhancing the competitiveness of our local economy and maintaining a strong and diverse revenue and job base in the City.

II. Purpose

The economic development strategy is focused on identifying and leveraging the strengths of the City of Rocklin and its public and private partners in order to foster a thriving business environment that is conducive to business growth, attraction and creation. These efforts are an investment public resources that can result in a strong and diverse business community by increasing employment opportunities, higher wage jobs, and securing tax revenues that fund the City’s high-quality public services.

The City is a liaison to connect businesses with resources and facilitators to address barriers to entry, growth, expansion, as well as act as a catalyst for development in strategic market segments. Additionally, to achieve its fiscal sustainability goals, the City will continue to promote development that results in economic and fiscal benefits to the City, enhances community character and the public realm, and supports necessary infrastructure improvements.

III. City Council Goal

As part of their Strategic Plan, the City Council has established the goal to Promote Economic Vitality and a Sustainable Community. This will be accomplished through a strong economy and sustainable community that depends on creating opportunities for business to thrive, strong residential and revenue-generating land use policy, and attention to Rocklin overall quality of life.

IV. Economic Development Strategy Goals

- Become a more data-drive operation by implementing industry standard software and analytics
- Create and implement a business retention and expansion program that allows the City to better understand and respond to the needs of local businesses

- Improve business attraction possibilities through a better understanding of Rocklin’s advantages, redesigned online communications, and by leveraging existing partners and resources
- Cultivate an entrepreneurial and academic environment that fosters innovation and helps create a workforce with skills desired by current and future employers
- Encourage activities that attract visitors

V. Economic Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

Strengths

- City includes major employers including Sierra College, United Natural Foods West, Oracle, Liberty Mutual, and UPS
- City includes destination retailers such as Bass Pro Shop, Trader Joes, Tractor Supply, Hobby Lobby, RC Willey and Pottery World
- City includes high-end auto dealers; Audi, Mercedes, Porsche, Tesla, and Land Rover as well as a number of recreation vehicle dealers
- City offers unique destination entertainment activities including: Quarry Park Adventures, Studio Movie Grill, Quarry Park Amphitheater and the Sunset Whitney Recreational Area
- City has a two-year community college and a four-year private university
- City has population with a high level of educational attainment and high annual household income

Weaknesses

- City does not control or derive revenue from utilities
- Utility connection costs are higher in Rocklin than other cities in the region
- Area industries including retail and hospitality are experiencing difficulty recruiting talent
- City has limited funds available for park development and maintenance, with increasing needs

Opportunities

- Development opportunities exist along the western edge of the city
- Key management practices dedicate a percentage of annual surplus budget dollars to an economic development fund
- The ability to create incentives for business growth and attraction may exist through a development fee waiver program
- City is represented by regional economic development agency which could be further leveraged
- Architectural Districts which could be leveraged for placemaking

Threats

- There is continued pressure to rezone commercial and industrial vacant land in Rocklin for residential development

- Rocklin is approaching buildout and does not have easily identifiable land for annexation
- City is increasingly subject to federal and state unfunded mandates
- The City has not been able to effectively offer business incentives without triggering prevailing wage
- City has strong development competition from surrounding jurisdictions

VI. Implementation Framework

The City Manager’s Office will be the designated lead for economic development efforts.

VII. Economic Development Strategies

Strategy #1 – Data

Strategic Objective

Capture data to establish a baseline of economic conditions in Rocklin and to provide timely, quantitative indicators for City officials, developers, and citizens.

Data Action Items

- a. Leverage confidential city-level California Economic Development Department (EDD) employment data through a partnership with Placer County and a contract with Beacon Economics to generate this data on a bi-annual basis.
- b. Identify leading local and regional industry clusters to target for growth using Greater Sacramento Economic Council available data.
- c. Develop, maintain and update Gross Domestic Product or GDP by industry, and how this compares to employment data.
- d. Using ESRI, develop, maintain, and update demographic data, using GIS mapping tools to visually express results.
- e. Acquire commercial and industrial real estate data through subscriptions to LoopLink and CoStar.

Strategy #2 – Business Retention and Expansion

Strategic Objective

Establish a comprehensive Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program to proactively connect with existing businesses in order to better understand and respond to their needs. Retaining existing business and helping them grow is statistically much more likely than landing a big business locate. Understanding existing business’ needs for growth, change, and training can lead to programs and partnerships that strengthen businesses and improve the overall business climate.

Strategic Actions

Action 2.1 – Launch Business Retention and Expansion Program

- a. Coordinate with Placer County BRE efforts to ensure consistent methodology.

- b. Using EDD and other data, identify key sectors and companies to target.
- c. The initial focus will include small businesses that employ between 10 to 99 employees, also known as Stage 2 firms. Startup businesses are more likely to fail with or without the City’s assistance and large businesses do not typically make relocation or expansion decisions locally.
- d. Develop a survey instrument and share with business ahead of appointments.
- e. Conduct site visits with businesses within key sectors – target 20 per year to be conducted through direct staff outreach.
- f. Perform detailed analytics regarding the survey results using CRM or other tool.
- g. Utilize the information to track trends for developing and implementing strategies that strengthen businesses, industry sectors, business linkages and supply chains.
- h. Conduct an economic-development educational program for City staff and members of appointed commissions.

Action 2.2 – Business Leader Outreach

- a. Establish an annual outreach meeting with community business and industry leaders to solicit input and present findings.
- b. Convene an annual meeting with Rocklin’s auto dealerships to discuss opportunities and challenges.
- c. Share findings from BRE program with policy makers.

Action 2.3 – ARPA Fund Investment

- a. Develop and implement a grant program to support existing businesses that sustained revenue loss due Covid-related closures.

Strategy #3 - Business Attraction

Strategic Objective

Increase Rocklin’s competitiveness for new businesses and those seeking to relocate. Focus on companies that create quality jobs, strengthen high value industries, support existing businesses, and fill vacant tenant spaces. Business attraction complements business retention and expansion by focusing on strategic opportunities with the highest potential benefit to the City’s existing businesses and residents. With an understanding of the City’s top employers, job base, and key tradeable sectors, the City can undertake strategic initiatives to attract new commercial and industrial development in in focus areas for economic growth.

Strategic Actions

Action 3.1 – Market to Target Industry Sectors

- a. Create electronic site selector packet that responds to key information needs of targeted prospects.
- b. Market the City’s available commercial/industrial property listings via subscription with LoopLink (\$395/mo.)
- c. Generate key real estate data analytics available through a subscription to CoStar (\$400/mo.)
- d. Acquire and use data to understand strong and growing sectors.

- e. Create a strategy for hosting business prospects visiting the City.
- f. Identify commercial and industrial opportunities that dovetail with activities planned in the Sunset Area of unincorporated Placer County.
- g. Identify and participate in key business events in the region and state through various meetings, trade shows, conventions and other networking opportunities.
- h. Convene targeted industry clusters to build relationships and address priorities.

Action 3.2 - Business Attraction Coordination Efforts with Outside Agencies

- a. Continue regional business recruitment efforts with the Greater Sacramento Economic Council (GSEC) to jointly market to businesses within the Greater Sacramento Area, State and nationally.
- b. When appropriate, prepare responses to requests for information from companies targeting the greater Sacramento region.
- c. Leverage partnerships with the local real estate community to keep Rocklin top of mind for primary employers. Develop relationships with area brokers and key property owners to better understand market conditions.

Action 3.3 – Implement Downtown/Quarry District Vision

- a. Invest in and maintain Quarry District infrastructure.
- b. Acquire the Big Gun property in order to pursue catalyst development opportunities.
- c. Revisit the existing BARRO Zone ordinance to identify areas for improved outcomes.
- d. Leverage visitor trips to Quarry Park Adventures and Quarry Park Amphitheater by highlighting other eat, stay, and play options in Rocklin.

Action 3.4 – Enhanced Development Support

- a. Prepare an analysis of the cost-of-doing-business in Rocklin versus competing locations in the region, including impact fees, labor, and real estate costs.
- b. Reposition the City’s Community Development Dept. to emphasize its economic development mission, including continued improvements to the planning, permitting and building processes.
- c. Establish a point of contact or ombudsman for the business community in the City Manager’s office.

Strategy #4 – Foster Local Entrepreneurship and New Business Formation

Strategic Objective

Increase opportunities for small businesses, entrepreneurs and start-up companies by building a network of partnerships and resources to help them succeed and grow in the local economy.

Strategic Actions

Action 4.1 - Partnerships

- a. Leverage and promote the free services of the Placer County Business Resource Center and the Sierra Small Business Council to encourage and support new small business formations.
- b. Partner with Placer County to leverage opportunities through the State Micro-Enterprise Grant Program.
- c. Explore partnerships with the locally-based Growth Factory to support scaling new companies in the city.

Action 4.2 – Facilitation

- a. Provide early permitting and regulatory navigation assistance.
- b. Identify local, state and federal business financing opportunities that could be helpful to businesses at different phases of development.

Strategy #5 – Workforce Development

Strategic Objective

Build a reliable pipeline of skilled workers that meet the needs of identified industry sectors. Workforce development in a highly competitive regional labor market has made attracting and retaining a reliable and talented workforce a top business concern.

Strategic Actions

Action 5.1 - Partnerships

- a. Partner with Sierra College, William Jessup University, the Golden Sierra Workforce Development Board and other vocational training programs to build a workforce pipeline of qualified workers with critical skills needed in target industries. Finalize a countywide Workforce Development Strategy.
- b. Explore a digital upskill program in partnership with regional entities, including neighboring municipalities, GSEC, Sierra College, William Jessup University, and the Growth Factory.
- c. Meet with representatives from higher education facilities responsible for technology transfer to determine how Rocklin can benefit from the commercialization of academic research.
- d. Connect businesses with hiring and training resources that target in-demand occupations and business needs for a skilled workforce, especially in identified industry clusters and growth sectors.
- e. Reduce workforce constraints as measured by the BRE survey of businesses.
- f. Explore how Rocklin can support the development, attraction and retention of talented young workers, particularly those that are entrepreneurial in nature.

Strategy #6 – Establish and Promote Incentives

Strategy Objective

Attract new targeted industries to the City with the use of select incentives. Incentives can also be used to signal a “business friendly” City and position Rocklin competitively with neighboring jurisdictions. Incentives can be both monetary and in the form of time savings. The City can explore potential new incentives and should promote the availability of existing ones.

Strategic Actions

Action 6.1 - Create Monetary Incentives

- a. Consider implementing a Development Impact Fee Deferral Program which allows a developer to defer payment of City assessed development impact fees that would otherwise be payable in full when a building permit is issued.
- b. Evaluate opportunities to utilize the Economic Development Reserve Fund. Provide low interest loans, grants, or fee off sets to companies that would achieve the following:
 - a. Increase tax base
 - b. Businesses that support or enhance the Downtown vision
 - c. Increase job base
- c. If allowed under the Final Rule, use seed funds from ARPA to offer a 1:1 match for new business street level monument signs from a minimum of \$1,000 (city's share) to a maximum of \$5,000 (city's share).
- d. Explore the implementation of a Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program to enhance the physical appearance and economic vitality of commercial businesses in the Quarry District.

Action 6.2 – Create Process-Oriented Incentives

- a. Provide site selection assistance. City staff needs to have extensive knowledge about the community and available properties for sale or lease and be able to quickly provide a list of available properties to meet site criteria. The City should have the latest demographic, trend and market data to support this effort.
- b. For catalyst projects, the City could consider offering expedited plan review, and receive plan check comments within seven days. Concurrent processing of certain development permits can occur prior to the approval of planning entitlements, along with the convenience of the PASS program, which already provides a more efficient and effective plan review process.
- c. Explore opportunities with area utility providers including Pioneer Energy, Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) and South Placer Municipal Utility District to offer competitive rates for key catalyst projects.

Strategy #7 – Marketing, Promotion, Communication

Strategic Objective

Create a marketing plan that is focused on data. Identify the top industries in Rocklin and the surrounding region and develop campaigns to assist current growing companies and attract potential new businesses tied to the leading local industries.

Strategic Actions

- a. Redesign the City's current economic development webpages and other online collateral. A new "microsite" would allow for content to be differentiated from other City pages and provide a more professional appearance to existing and potential businesses.
- b. During potential development of a new microsite, the current economic development pages could be refreshed to include more robust demographics, employment data, a site selection tool, incentives, resources, additional information on quality of life, and more.
- c. Initiate a GIS-based Property Locator Application to the City's economic development webpage to locate office/industrial development sites.
- d. Develop marketing collateral that can be easily customized and tailored to respond to specific Requests for Information from potential companies
- e. Leverage relationships with the Placer County Visitor's Bureau, the Arts Council of Placer County, and Placer Valley Tourism to reach visitor audiences and communicate the City's brand and visitor opportunities.
- f. Provide regular City economic development updates at meetings of the business groups and associations involved in economic development.
- g. Provide an annual overview and summary of the economic development work plan accomplishments, including new businesses that have expanded or located in Rocklin, to the City Manager and City Council.
- h. Establish an annual local economic development report card to monitor and track economic growth.
- i. Partner with the Rocklin Chamber to expand the existing "Buy Local" program to encourage local residents to buy from local merchants.