



CHAPTER 4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

To remain vital, Clear Creek County will need to provide an environment conducive to businesses, good jobs for workers, and what is necessary to support those business and jobs. This includes good housing, access to services (include high speed internet), a high quality of life, and a healthful environment. Given the current economic and fiscal conditions in the County, investment in economic development in the coming years will be necessary. However these investments must be highly strategic—focusing on those that will work across multiple economic development strategies, capitalize on the existing strengths of the County, and leverage state, federal and private support and partnership opportunities.

The economic development goals and strategies provided herein seek to support the County's existing job base and its mix of industry, government, retail trade, professional services and tourism while encouraging the creation of new jobs and industries that benefit workers and maintain the County's rural mountain character and lifestyle.

This chapter identifies six primary goals, each with a series of individual strategies, aimed at making development of Clear Creek County's economy sustainable over time.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Based on the community input process, meetings with key stakeholders, economic focus group and the efforts of the CAC, several important guiding principles emerged for economic development:

1. Diversification - Support the efforts of the County to have a more diverse economic base.
2. Employment – Support opportunities to expand the County's job base.
3. Supporting Local Governments and Sub-Areas – Support economic activity throughout the County, understanding the important role local governments and sub-areas play as economic centers.
4. Tourism and Recreation – Support the role that tourism and recreation play in the regional economy.
5. Mining and Resource Extraction – Support the continuation of mining and broadening the opportunities for resource extraction
6. Transportation – Support systems that create a “backbone” for regional economic activity.
7. Infrastructure – Support the development of infrastructure tht facilitates economic development, and where it demonstrates a net benefit to the County.
8. Investment – Support investments in economic development only where it demonstrates a net benefit to the County.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Goal A: Clear Creek County will make a commitment to foster new economic development opportunities that diversify the economy and support the fiscal and economic health of the County.

Strategies

1. Recognize the Clear Creek Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) as an important source for economic development information, data and services in Clear Creek County. Partner with the CCEDC in the development of economic diversification strategies and leverage statewide resources such as the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OED) and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) to study and identify those industries best suited to Clear Creek County. Invite those industries that would improve wage levels, increase variety of employment opportunities and utilize the resident labor force.
2. Encourage development proposals that will benefit the County's economic diversification effort. Work to assess the fiscal and economic impact of land use and economic development decisions at the local scale, while allowing for flexibility in development of new infrastructure.
3. Foster a positive entrepreneurial environment for business start-ups and expansion; support retention of existing businesses. Focus on the health of the existing businesses while simultaneously recruiting new business and industry. Support and foster home-base occupations and actively participate in expanding and improving access to broadband internet and cellular communications systems needed for these businesses to flourish.
4. Seek ways to assist clusters of related businesses in manufacturing, technology and service sectors to collaborate more closely with one another and to market themselves as magnets for capital and jobs.
5. Pursue businesses in industries deemed the best fit for the County based on the 2015 Economic Agenda document. These include renewable energy, breweries and distilleries, outdoor recreation retailers and manufacturers, and hospitality related businesses (see sidebar).

Challenges for creating economically healthy community

- Location for certain businesses not close enough to urban metros
- Limited properties (buildings/sites) for expanding or new businesses
- In some cases appropriate zoning not in place for business sites and buildings causing extensive time in processing infrastructure upgrades needed (broadband, water and wastewater)
- Commercial Land Protection not in place
- Workforce Basic Skills
- I-70 Image
- Way Finding Signage needed to promote assets
- High Retail Sales Leakage (est. \$35.0 million)
- Widespread access to broadband internet



6. Promote redevelopment opportunities by targeting underutilized or underdeveloped properties and land banking them and/or making strategic investments in their reuse. Local control is important to get properties ready for investment and to hold for the right economic opportunities. Surplus properties should be banked. An economic development land bank already exists with the Clear Creek Economic Development Corporation.
7. Encourage economic development to occur where resources exist to support the development. For example, retail uses should be encouraged to be clustered in municipalities and multiple use zones, while alternative energy or other industries should be encouraged to locate in areas that contain the necessary resources.
8. Work to create an atmosphere of predictability. Economic development opportunities are enhanced by a positive economic and regulatory environment that offers flexibility, consistency, predictability and clear direction. Coordinate community development, planning and economic development strategies to be consistent with the overall goals of the Master Plan.
9. Support and provide, where appropriate, economic development techniques such as Enterprise Zone tax credits, tax increment financing (TIF), Public Improvement Fee (PIF) funds, use of industrial revenue bonds, business incubator facilities, low interest loans and possible business incentives to provide a business climate conducive to new and start-up businesses.
10. Be proactive in kick-starting economic development with a “Catalyst Project” that creates attention to the commitment and entrepreneurship of the community.
11. Create a niche marketing plan that matches the land, buildings, and catalyst projects to target businesses and creates a value proposition for those businesses to be in the County.

Goal B: Clear Creek County will make a commitment to increasing its employment base of jobs at all levels, but particularly primary jobs, in such industries as manufacturing, technology, and service.

Strategies:

1. Market the County's unique location, with access to both the Denver Metro and exceptional natural amenities and recreation, in order to stimulate job creation in local businesses and attract new cottage industries, light manufacturing and home-based businesses. Encourage job recruitment efforts towards those sectors that capitalize on these strengths of the region.
2. Provide access to employment and training services that can help develop a trained workforce which can compete for jobs, earn a living wage and meet the needs of business. Work with coalitions and other agencies to participate in the development of competency-based education and training programs. Encourage the development of training programs for people currently employed so they may improve and broaden their skills into new arenas. Work with schools and communities to insure employment opportunities for youth.
3. Explore opportunities to supply a satellite office for firms in Denver that may be a good fit for the County's lifestyle.



4. Encourage both commercial and residential development (multiple uses in close proximity) within appropriate areas which includes a variety of employment options for residents.
5. Improve access to healthcare within the County to maximize business and employee recruitment efforts.
6. Ensure housing availability supports the attraction and retention of the workforce, including provision of rental, family housing and seasonal employment housing.
7. Leverage recreation and quality of life improvements, such as the Clear Creek Greenway, **as** a draw for businesses looking to locate in an area that provides such resources to their employees.

Goal C: Recognizing the importance of the municipalities and sub-areas as economic centers of the region, the County will make a commitment to promoting intergovernmental cooperation and public-private partnerships that encourage innovation and creativity in the economic expansion of our area.

Strategies:

1. Encourage town councils and boards to retain a unified commitment to expand the communities' joint economy and make it a high priority. Recognize the importance of enhancing the County's tax base, sales tax and other revenue streams to provide funds for County services.
2. Improve coordination of information and services among government offices which affect the viability of business in Clear Creek County.
3. Work with municipalities to identify opportunities for infill and location of new businesses or expansions within them. Encourage greater utilization of the municipalities as a hub of expanded retail, business and cultural activity.
4. Support municipal vitality and vibrancy by supporting and participating in community surveys, studies and projects aimed at increasing the economic viability of Clear Creek County's small municipalities and sub-areas.
5. Encourage logical, contiguous annexations by incorporated municipalities in order to provide for current and future growth patterns. Do this with respect of existing residents of those annexed areas.
6. Explore public and private partnerships to increase access to high-speed internet. Identify and seek to reduce or eliminate regulatory constraints that hinder the expansion of broadband infrastructure.



Goal D: Recognizing the importance of tourism and recreation to the economy and to the health of the County’s retail and service core, Clear Creek County will make a commitment to encourage sustainable cultural and recreation-based tourism development that enables the County to attract year round destination visitors as well as pass-through visitor traffic.

Strategies:

1. Partner with the **Clear Creek Tourism Bureau** in the development of tourism development strategies and leverage statewide resources **for tourism promotion, such as the** Colorado Tourism Office (CTO).
2. Support the Greenway Authority and the development of the Clear Creek Greenway as a significant community amenity and tourist destination to improve economic development opportunities for the county and its municipalities. Ensure the Greenway will link to commercial areas, and encourage visitors to shop, rent bikes, purchase fishing equipment and dine while traveling its length. Seek out joint ventures with commercial recreation providers and encourage related commercial uses to locate near the creek.
3. Leverage Clear Creek (waterway) as an economic engine for the community through the development of additional access points, bus parking for commercial rafting operations, and linking greenway improvements and river access projects. Provide opportunities for recreation industry businesses to develop in multiple use areas along Clear Creek.
4. Recognizing Clear Creek County is rich in heritage that is valuable to preserve, promote businesses that fit into this historic environment and leverage cultural resources, which provide attractions, as a tool for stimulating economic development.
5. Encourage the development of more destination facilities and activities in the County, especially those with family orientation.





6. Increase the County's share of the tourism market through marketing the full breadth of cultural and recreation tourism in Clear Creek County as a cohesive, world-class tourism destination.
7. Build on the County's locational advantages for pass-through visitor services by encouraging lodging, retail and transportation services.
8. Recognize that recreation and quality of life improvements, such as open space preservation or transportation enhancements, have value for both residents and visitors and consider tourism aspects when developing such projects.
9. Work with Loveland Ski Area and USFS for year-round access to the ski area for non-skiing activities such as concerts, mountain biking, etc.
10. Encourage the development of a multi-faceted lodging sector in Clear Creek County that includes a mid to large-sized, mid-price, national brand hotel that is easily recognizable from the highway, numerous local "boutique" options, and a "critical mass" of Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs).
11. Ensure open communication between recreation, open space, tourism and economic development initiatives to ensure individual strategies can work together to achieve County goals.
12. Consider a sales tax increase to fund transit, recreation management, and marketing of the County.

Goal E: Recognizing the evolving role of Clear Creek County's natural resources as an income base and revenue source, the County will make a commitment to encourage the on-going development of resource-based industries including but not limited to minerals, water and alternative energy generation, while also embracing the County's mining heritage and exploring opportunities for mine site redevelopment.

Strategies:

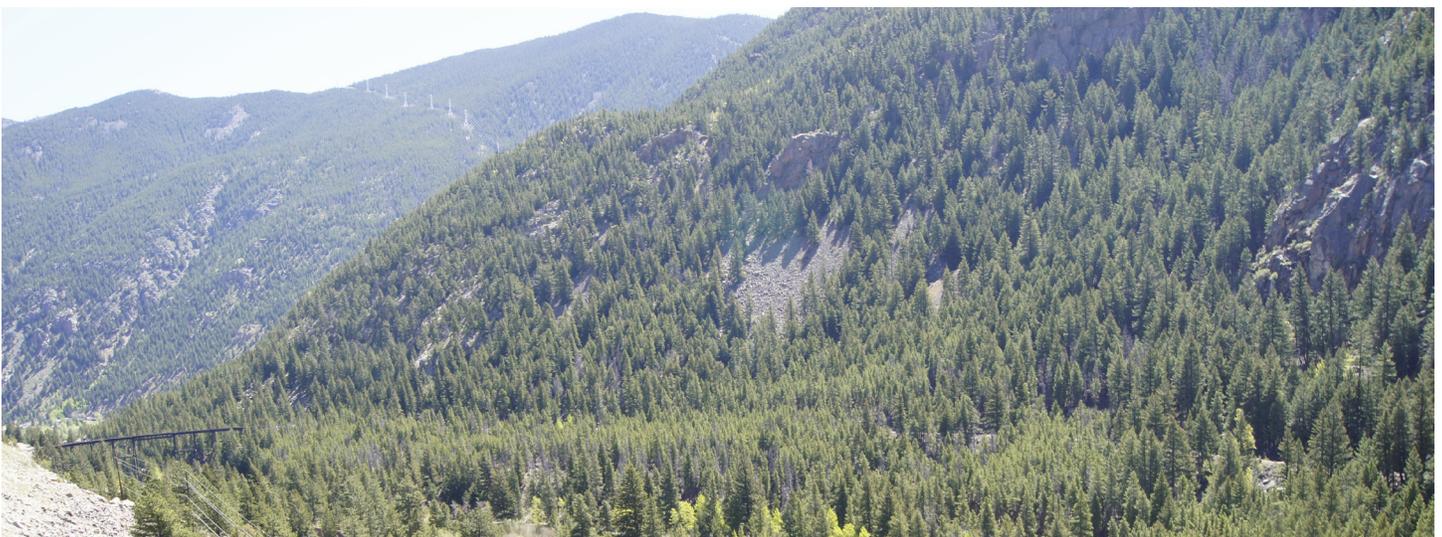
1. Develop Clear Creek County's natural resources including water, mining and other alternative sources of power as an economic base and potential for revenue as a community owned asset.
2. Protect long term, commercially significant, natural resource lands from encroachment from conflicting uses.
3. Expand and manage water resources including water rights and storage.
4. Convert the Henderson Mine to long-term multiple underground and above ground potential uses including commercial, industrial (medium to heavy), recreation, open space, office, academic and research & development. Consider other mine site redevelopment opportunities throughout the County.
5. Preserve the County's mining heritage by promoting the continuation of mining activity at various scales while protecting historic mining elements that may have cultural significance.



Goal F: Recognizing there is a need to coordinate community investments in infrastructure and other public facilities with economic development opportunities and employment centers, Clear Creek County will make a commitment to maximize the value of these assets to achieve economic development objectives.

Strategies:

1. Improve the image (visual and emotional) of the County along the I-70 corridor.
2. Consider economic development in the consideration of solutions for high volume traffic on major highways, good access to activity centers, and connectivity throughout the County.
3. Ensure that preventive maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure are a priority for infrastructure spending. This approach reduces maintenance costs later, supports business and residential investment in areas already served by infrastructure, and creates jobs.
4. Recognizing infrastructure availability is one of the most critical factors to encourage economic development, make strategic infrastructure investments needed to support the expanding economy, where there is a demonstrated net benefit to the County. Expand public water and sanitation systems and other infrastructure to meet the needs of growth outside municipal or special district boundaries only where impact analysis has demonstrated a net benefit to the community.
5. Actively promote high-speed broadband internet and cellular communications connectivity throughout the County. Promote systems based on flexibility, system security, reliability and affordability. Consider using County land resources to support private broadband and/or cellular telecommunications infrastructure. When making investments in communications, take into consideration the ability of technology to enhance the provision of public services to citizens and businesses with deference to scenic and environmental constraints.





SUPPORTING THE VISION

The following matrix summarizes how each of the Economic Development goals relates and supports the Policy Framework statements identified in Chapter 3.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS	SUPPORTING POLICY FRAMEWORK STATEMENTS (See Chapter 3)										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Goal A: Clear Creek County will make a commitment to foster new economic development opportunities that diversify the economy and support the fiscal and economic health of the County.	X					X					X
Goal B: Clear Creek County will make a commitment to increasing its employment base of jobs at all levels, but particularly primary jobs, in such industries as manufacturing, technology, and service.	X				X			X			X
Goal C: Recognizing the importance of the municipalities and sub-areas as economic centers of the region, the County will make a commitment to promoting intergovernmental cooperation and public-private partnerships that encourage innovation and creativity in the economic expansion of our area.	X	X			X						
Goal D: Recognizing the importance of tourism and recreation to the economy and to the health of the County's retail and service core, Clear Creek County will make a commitment to encourage sustainable cultural and recreation-based tourism development that enables the County to attract year round destination visitors as well as pass-through visitor traffic.	X	X	X			X	X				
Goal E: Recognizing the evolving role of Clear Creek County's natural resources as an income base and revenue source, the County will make a commitment to encourage the on-going development of resource-based industries including but not limited to minerals, water and alternative energy generation, while also embracing the County's mining heritage and exploring opportunities for mine site redevelopment.	X		X					X			
Goal F: Recognizing there is a need to coordinate community investments in infrastructure and other public facilities with economic development opportunities and employment centers, Clear Creek County will make a commitment to maximize the value of these assets to achieve economic development objectives.	X	X			X				X	X	