

Tehama County Sees Growth in Economic Development

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Tehama County wants to bring new jobs for residents, and help our existing local businesses thrive. For that reason, in 2015, the Board of Supervisors created an economic development program, to continue and enhance the efforts of residents who have worked for many years to increase tourism and help local business. When the Board took this action, they cited meetings they had with economic development officials in Patterson, California, who said economic development is a process and that it generally takes five to ten years before significant progress is achieved. Even given that warning, we are proud of the progress we are making.

In 2016, we saw a lot of positive growth and change for the expanding Tehama County Economic Development program. In February, Amanda Jenkins joined me, and has been an incredible addition. You can often find Amanda in the community, attending events and meeting with local business owners. Amanda heads up community engagement, while I focus on program development and expansion.

Over the past year, the economic development program worked on enhancing the program and preparing the county for future business expansion. We successfully launched an economic development specific website this year: www.Tehama4Business.org. The purpose of this website is to help attract people outside of Tehama County to consider us as somewhere they would want to locate their new or expanding business. The Tehama County Economic Development program is active on social media. We are on Facebook as Tehama County Economic Development, and on Twitter @TehamaCountyED.

We have also completed a series of short videos to market Tehama County to people looking to relocate or expand their business. The video series features seven short films covering subjects such as education and healthy living, economic development, parks and recreation and more. These videos are available for view at our website. The videos were viewed by the public in October, when we held a video premier party at the State Theatre in Red Bluff. We wanted to recognize and thank the many local business owners who contributed to this project, and stepped up to help make it a success.

Another advantage that Tehama County has in its favor is plenty of land available for new industry throughout the Interstate 5 and Highway 99 corridors. This is a huge asset for Tehama County as land prices rise and vacant space becomes scarcer throughout much of California. Business owners looking to move or expand want building sites that are shovel ready. This means that available properties must have the necessary infrastructure in place like electrical access, water, sewer and, in some cases, broadband Internet access.

I am working with staff at the Rural County Representatives of California, located in Sacramento, to seek out grant and loan opportunities to assist in paying for the needed infrastructure improvements.

It has come to RCRC's attention that the rural development arm of the USDA has a significant amount of funding available for infrastructure improvements in rural areas, but they have not been able to find the right vehicle to distribute those funds. RCRC, through its business arm, may be able to provide USDA with that vehicle, and has asked Tehama County to serve as a pilot county in working with RCRC and the USDA to see how the funds can be accessed and made available to the local rural jurisdictions. If this has the potential that we believe it does, it will be a huge positive for Tehama County.

Amanda's meetings with local business owners are important, because they give the team an idea of what the local business community needs. She has heard from many community leaders that better access to high speed Internet is essential. For this reason the economic development team is working closely with Praxis Associates, who are trying to secure funding to run "middle mile" fiber optic cable through Tehama County to connect a fiber optic project on State Route 299 to Sacramento. Should funding be secured, the involvement of the Tehama County Economic Development Program will help ensure the fiber optic cable is installed through areas that will benefit local business.

Many exciting things lie ahead in 2017, I am working with an organization that wants to bring a large scale solar facility to Tehama County, which would create several permanent, local, high paying jobs, with many more created during construction. While nothing is signed, this is an exciting possibility for job creation in Tehama County.

Additionally, Amanda and I have a long list of program goals in 2017, including implementing a quarterly newsletter to help keep local residents up to date on our efforts, adopting an economic development strategy document identifying 10-20 year goals, working to ensure that our county is infrastructure ready and much more.

We look forward to working with our local business community, our Board of Supervisors, the state and private entities to help make Tehama County a place where businesses can thrive and where the future looks bright for our residents.

Caylyn Wright is the Economic Development Director for Tehama County.

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