



MARIPOSA COUNTY

Administration/Community Development · 966-3222



RESOLUTION - ACTION REQUESTED 2019-296

MEETING: June 4, 2019

TO: The Board of Supervisors

FROM: Dallin Kimble, County Administrative Officer

RE: Authorize the Submission of EPA Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Grant

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Approve Submittal of a Grant Application to the Environmental Protection Agency for the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Planning Assistance & Workshop

Staff is pursuing this grant as partners with Main Street Mariposa, which is dedicated to the revitalization of downtown Mariposa. The funding will pay for a planning team that will bring together local residents and other stakeholders to decide on strategies and an action plan to grow the local outdoor recreation economy. The planning assistance process will take place over a period of four to six months, with a focal point being a two-day, facilitated community workshop. Participants will work together to identify a vision, goals, and specific actions to realize the locally set goals.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

The Board of Supervisors has approved similar grants in the past.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

If the Board does not approve the request, the grant application will not be submitted.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Staff time to place and maintain recepticals

ATTACHMENTS:

2019_rerc_application_reader_extended (PDF)

Letter of support_EDC (PDF)

RESULT: ADOPTED AS AMENDED BY CONSENT VOTE [UNANIMOUS]

MOVER: Marshall Long, District III Supervisor

SECONDER: Kevin Cann, District IV Supervisor

AYES: Smallcombe, Jones, Long, Cann, Menetrey

Recreation Economy for Rural Communities

2019 Application

Before filling out this form, please read the request for applications at <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities-2019-application>

Lead Organization: Mariposa County

Project Location City: Mariposa

State: CA County: 95338

Population (See: <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>): 18, 251

Point of Contact (must be available for duration of project to lead coordination of local participation and interact with the planning assistance team)

First Name: Tara

Last Name: Schiff

Position/Title: Economic Development Specialist

Email: tschiff@mariposacounty.org

Phone Number: (209)742-1214

Check if you are located in the service area of the Northern Border Regional Commission (as defined at <http://www.nbrc.gov/>)

In the space below, explain your interest in the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities program. Include answers to the following:

- What is the project's geographic scope (e.g., neighborhood, town)?
- What is the area's demographic makeup and economic condition?
- What challenges does your community face around economic development and diversification?
- What challenges does your community face in terms of Main Street revitalization?
- How do you propose to leverage outdoor recreation and nearby forests and natural lands to strengthen Main Street revitalization and economic diversification?
- What strategies and opportunities to build on the outdoor recreation economy would you like to explore through this program?
- How would a community workshop through Recreation Economy for Rural Communities help you achieve your goals?
- What will be the environmental benefits of achieving your goals?
- What partners will be involved in creating and implementing your action plan, such as community representatives (governmental and non-governmental), public agencies and institutions, local development districts/regional development organizations, community colleges/universities, non-governmental organizations, foundations, and businesses? How will elected officials support this effort?

Your response must fit into the two boxes below. Text does not automatically flow from one box to the next. You must click on each box.

The project geographic scope is Main Street in the town of Mariposa, California, which is located on California State Highway 140 en route to Yosemite National Park.

The population of the town of Mariposa is 2,173, with a population density of 485 per square mile. The median age is 52 and the male/female ratio is nearly 1:1. The income per capita is \$20,750 with a median household income of \$45,534. Due to the seasonal nature of the tourism-dependent economy, unemployment rate is 12.3% and the poverty level is 27.8%.

Recent natural disasters, winter storms, floods and fires, have greatly impacted the local economy. The probability of natural disasters creates a challenge to the local community and, in particular, economic development. Diversification of economic drivers are challenged by the rural proximity of the town of Mariposa, and Mariposa County, in general. Located more than 30 miles from a main interstate, with no rail and limited broadband infrastructure, and a national park located within the county, the economy is almost exclusively dependent on tourism.

Main Street Mariposa is an official Main Street America 501(c)3 and was created in 2018 with the intention of revitalizing the historic Main Street corridor. Originally built in 1850, downtown Mariposa has faced numerous fires, floods and other natural disasters, which is just one of the many challenges. The aging buildings, which are located in the historic district, are subject to historic preservation restrictions, so any structural improvements, signage or exterior changes must be approved by the local historic sites commission. In addition, many of the retail stores, whose merchandise is focused toward tourists, sell similar products and have limited hours of operation. The Main Street businesses could certainly be more diverse. A gap analysis of Main Street in Mariposa shows opportunity in ways of recreation equipment and general services and amenities for local and visiting recreation enthusiasts.

As the home to Yosemite National Park, it will not be difficult for Mariposa County to leverage outdoor recreation and national forests and natural lands to strengthen Main Street revitalization. Outdoor recreation is a natural fit with Mariposa County with a national park and national forests lying within our county lines. The historic Main Street corridor could greatly benefit by capitalizing on the many people who visit the area to experience the recreational opportunities. Currently, Main Street lacks recreational retail stores that could support outdoor activities, i.e. bicycle shops, rentals, repair, accessories, hiking equipment, backpacks, tents, sleeping bags, snowboard & ski shops with rentals, sales, clothing, and accessories. There are many opportunities that have yet to be explored. As the home to El Capitan, a rock climbing mecca, it seems like a natural fit to offer rock climbing accessories or a training center on Main Street, which is on the way to El Capitan and Yosemite National Park. In addition, breweries, entertainment, and more restaurants could be added to enhance the travel experience of the outdoor recreation visitor.

With a gap in the outdoor recreation retail market, we would like to explore strategies that will enforce the conservation of the local forests and lands, while economically benefiting from the outdoor recreation influence. Mariposa County would like to explore all of the opportunities available to build on the outdoor recreation economy. We would particularly like to focus on opportunities that coincide with outdoor recreation activities available in our county, including hiking/backpacking, rock climbing, cycling/mountain biking, skiing/snowboarding/snowshoeing, fly fishing, river rafting and other activities that take place in the Sierra mountains.

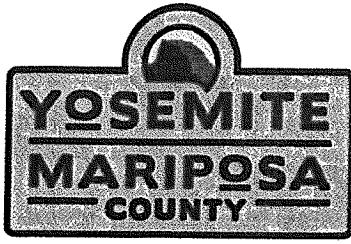
A community workshop through Recreation Economy for Rural Communities would help Main Street Mariposa achieve our goals of revitalizing historic downtown by discussing the outdoor recreation economic opportunities and, more so, discovering why there is a gap on Main Street in the recreation market, and why previous recreation-related businesses did not succeed. With more than 1.2 million visitors traveling through Main Street Mariposa each year to visit Yosemite National Park and our local national forests and natural lands, it make sense that the recreational retail market would be a perfect fit. A workshop could help realize the potential for such a market, and assist with creating a strategic plan to achieving the goals of revitalizing Main Street via the outdoor recreation economy.

The environmental benefits of creating an outdoor recreation master plan would be to dedicate natural land for recreational activities, while highlighting the uses of the public land within the county. By strategically planning the types of activities the county wants to actively encourage and promote, as well as discourage, it will guide how to distribute proposed recreational activities appropriately on the landscape in a way that will minimize negative impacts to sensitive species and habitats. This will reduce unintended consequences of poor planning which could lead to undesirable social trail networks, over-concentration of user impacts in sensitive locations, and translocation of invasive species; and foster appropriate activities in locations with the ecological capacity to sustain them. The master plan will also account for long-term considerations, which will allow us to do many things: take advantage of land acquisition opportunities for priority easements and planned park/recreation spaces that will benefit the environment; and increase awareness of ecological and economic resiliency to climate change in those acquisitions and economic development opportunities that we can pursue.

There are also positive environmental benefits to consider. The adoption of a well-considered outdoor recreation plan will foster/facilitate community recreation in the local environment in a way that has the potential to increase both local residents' and visitors' engagement in environmental cleanup and ecological restoration activities, which is a direct benefit to the environment in either improving habitat or at the very least mitigating O.R. effects. It also provides indirect environmental benefits via fostering stewardship and environmental advocacy activities in the local community. An outdoor recreation master plan would allow the county to:

1. strategically locate recreational programs to provide users with the best experiences of the landscape while having the least amount of impact on it;
2. align our recreational programming with other community goals, especially wildfire risk reduction and flood mitigation, both of which are becoming increasingly critical community priorities as climate change continues to exacerbate Mariposa County's vulnerability to natural disasters;
3. promote a culture that celebrates and exults outdoor experiences as a source of pride and prosperity, which will foster a sense of environmental stewardship and responsibility in residents and visitors.

The partners that would be involved in creating and implementing our action plan would be Main Street Mariposa, the Economic Development Corporation, and the Mariposa County Chamber of Commerce. We will also work with the County supervisor from District IV, Kevin Cann, who oversees Main Street, as well as Yosemite National Park, the Forest Service, Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau, RCD, UC Merced (Steve Shackleton).



The Economic Development Corporation of Mariposa County
PO BOX 751 Mariposa CA 95338

17 May 2019

Tara Schiff, Economic Development Specialist
PO Box 784
Mariposa, CA 95338

Dear Ms Schiff,

The Board of the Economic Development Corporation of Mariposa County(EDC) supports the application for funding assistance to develop an Outdoor Recreation Master Plan for the County of Mariposa.

Mariposa County has rich natural resources including many that have minimal access currently. EDC board members recognize the need for a comprehensive master plan that would provide guidance and establish priorities for access to these resources.

The Economic Vitality Strategy (EVS), revised in 2017, identifies the need to diversify recreational opportunities for citizens, visitors and tourists alike. The revision process for the EVS involved broad community involvement and demonstrates the capacity of the Mariposa County community to arrive at a consensus with a good plan for sustainable, environmentally responsible economic growth.

Retaining the natural resources and beauty of the environment is a recognized goal of the community at large. EDC board members have received comments about a variety of expanded activities such as mountain bike trails along with other creative ideas. The EDC recognizes that implementation of these ideas is hindered due to lack of a comprehensive plan and funding shortfalls in this rural, low income community.

This grant opportunity is timely as the community environment is primed for a process to develop an Outdoor Recreation Master Plan through active and positive community involvement. A Master Plan would incorporate current separate and fragmented plans such as the 2011 Bike and Pedestrian Plan and the current Mariposa Creek Parkway Plan. A Master Plan would identify other areas for development in an environmentally aware and sustainable manner. It would give the community the opportunity to develop a cohesive approach to access natural resources, ensure sustainable use of those resources and realize the economic growth derived thereby. It would enable the community to develop a basis on which to prioritize projects. It would support applications for further funding to implement existing and future plans.

The Economic Development Corporation of Mariposa County strongly supports submission of this application and urges its approval by the EPA.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Saunders, President
The Economic Development Corporation of Mariposa County