



# **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2024-2029**

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**Colusa County, California**

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# INTRODUCTION

Colusa County is centrally located in northern California approximately 70 miles north of Sacramento. Four highways traverse the county—Interstate 5, the major north/south route in the state, bisects Colusa County. State Routes 20 and 45 also serve to connect communities within Colusa County and the region. State Highway 99, another major north/south transportation route to the east in Butte and Sutter Counties, runs parallel with Highway 45. Two incorporated cities are located within the county—the City of Colusa, and the City of Williams. There are a number of unincorporated communities (Stonyford, Princeton, Maxwell, Arbuckle, College City, and Grimes) throughout the county that are important residential, agricultural and economic centers.

Colusa County is a place where people live and work, as well as commute to other areas to work. The most recent data available (2019) shows that nearly 2,000 workers commute from Colusa County to jobs in other counties of the region—primarily Glenn, Yolo, and Sutter Counties (see Appendix).

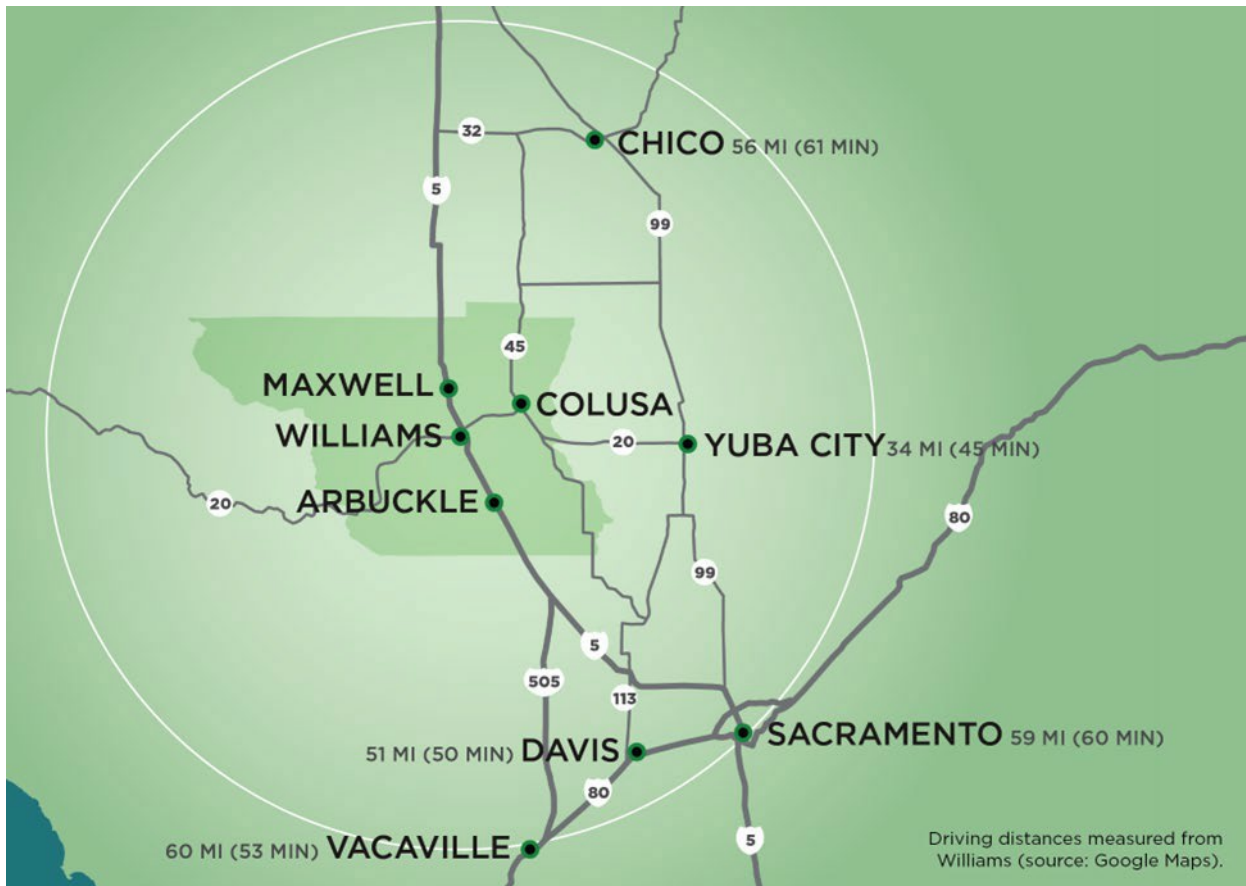


Figure 1. Colusa County's location within the Northern California region

Like much of the North Valley, Colusa County was affected by a series of economic disruptions over the recent years—drought, wildfires, and COVID-19 pandemic State restrictions.

## Drought

California’s severe drought has been an issue for over a decade, specifically for local farmers but also for any business that uses water as a primary input, for example, manufacturing, leisure, and hospitality. Figure 2 (top) shows the severity of drought conditions in Colusa County each year from 2013 through 2022. During many of these years, as much as 100% of the Colusa County land area was in some degree of drought. Although the end of 2022 and beginning of 2023 were extremely wet, given the sequential years of drought, the state and county were still in a defined drought period. These years of drought conditions recorded in Colusa County as well as the state as a whole, have contributed to declines in annual crop production values in 2014, 2016, 2020, 2021 and 2022 (bottom chart in Figure 2).

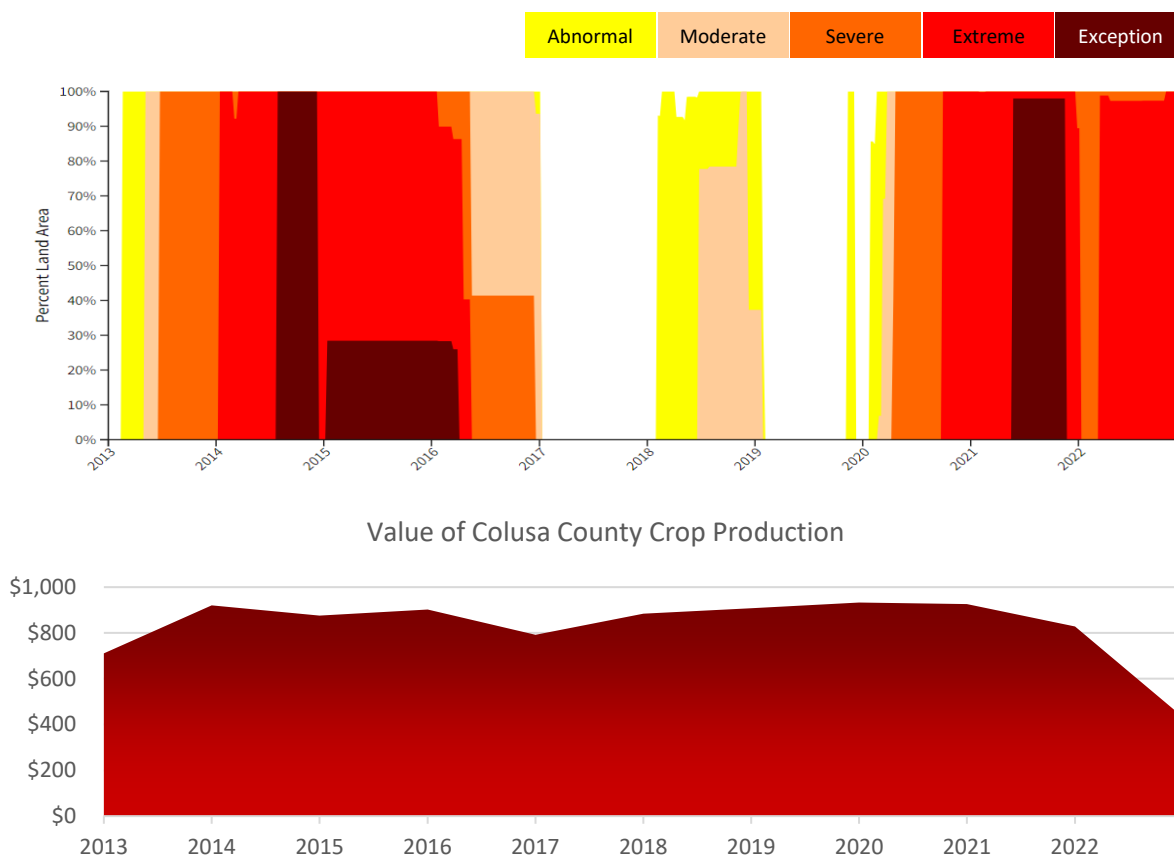


Figure 2. Upper chart shows the severity of drought conditions in Colusa County measured by the percentage of land affected. The lower chart shows the volatility in the value of Colusa County crop production during the same time period. Sources: [www.drought.gov](http://www.drought.gov) and Colusa County crop report

In 2021, the continued drought significantly influenced the planted acres in Colusa County 2013 to 2022 (source: National Integrated Drought Information System, drought.gov). For the first time in decades, rice acreage dropped below 100,000 acres. Fallowing fields when water allocations are curtailed, not only affects rice, but also annual row and field crops. These reductions along with market price fluctuations, resulted in a \$98,884,000 loss in value of rice production for 2021 compared to 2020.

In 2022, Colusa County’s agriculture industry faced a devastating crop production for multiple commodities and hit unprecedented lows. The drought conditions throughout California led to some of the lowest water allocations ever seen in Colusa County. The allotments of water were so low that many growers were forced to fallow fields while others pulled orchards. In addition to the disastrous drought, freeze and heat severely impacted all three of Colusa’s top crops. The water allocations took rice down by over 80%, the spring freeze reduced harvested almonds by 62% while the late season heat affected walnut quality dropping their value by 49%. The combined result was that the gross value of Colusa County’s agricultural production in 2022 was \$433,189,000; a decrease of 47.7% in comparison to the already lowered production value of 2021.

While it is important to note that other factors contributed to the decline in crop production value (e.g., commodity prices and global competition), the repeated years of drought and extreme weather have had a marked impact, especially in recent years.

## Wildfires

Related to the drought conditions are wildfires the county and the region experience. The 2018 Camp Fire in nearby Butte County began a change in regional employment, housing and resident migration that impacted Colusa and other northern California communities’ population and local economy. Colusa County itself suffered several wildfires over recent years.

	Fire	Acres Burned	Days Active
The 2018 Mendocino Complex (Ranch Fire) burned 459,000 acres and 280 structures causing millions in economic losses, impacted crops, ranch animals, and contributed to poor air quality. At the time this was the largest recorded wildfire; surpassed by the August Complex fire in 2020 which also included Colusa County.	2017 – Sand Fire	70	176
	2018 – Mendocino Complex <sup>1</sup>	459,000	160
	2018 – Stony Fire	75	184
	2019 – Spring Fire	20	1
	2020 – August Complex <sup>2</sup>	1,032,648	87
	2020 – Hill Fire	138	1
	2020 – Nail Fire	25	2
	2020 – Sites Fire	560	3
	2022 – River Fire	595	4
2023 – Lodoga Fire	22	3	

Figure 3. Wildfires impacting Colusa County and the region; Source: CalFire [www.fire.ca.gov/incidents](http://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents)

<sup>1</sup> Ranch and River fires, included Colusa, Glenn, Lake, and Mendocino Counties

<sup>2</sup> Included Colusa, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake Mendocino, Tehama, and Trinity Counties

## Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic created another economic shock, but Colusa County has shown more resilience than its regional neighbors. The shadow effects of the pandemic hang over Colusa’s regional neighbors more than Colusa County, as the number of working residents and jobs hired by Colusa employers have all increased slightly faster than Butte, Tehama, Sutter, and Yuba counties (Figure 4).

Sutter and Yuba counties experienced a rise in the number of workers and working residents, an effect of outmigration to these counties from Sacramento County primarily. The continued growth and resilience of Sacramento’s metro area is also affecting Colusa County positively. Colusa County’s resilience and growth since 2020 can be attributed to population change and working families coming to Colusa.

An important contributing factor to Colusa County’s resiliency and recovery is that county essential services and businesses were not shuttered during the pandemic in a manner that occurred in other nearby counties. For example, county essential services such as planning, building plan check, and inspection services remained open the entire time of the pandemic which was vital in supporting small local contractors. The county’s agriculture industry is another essential service that remained open.

Furthering the recovery, in 2020 Colusa County implemented a small business grant program to assist businesses that were experiencing significant financial impacts as a result of State closure mandates. Nearly \$796,769 in 86 grants was distributed to 55 businesses throughout the county, including businesses within the jurisdictions of the cities of Williams and Colusa.

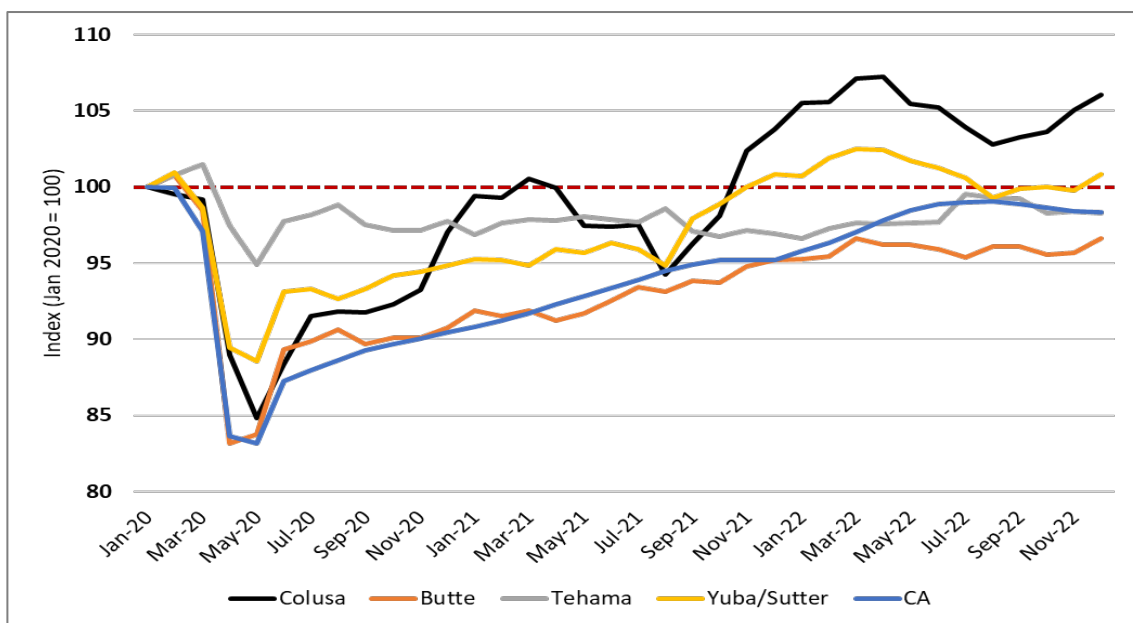


Figure 4. Residential Employment as of December 2022. Sources: California EDD, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and EFA, data are seasonally adjusted.

# Organization of the CEDS

The Colusa County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) addresses the economic challenges that the county continues to experience as well as identifies economic opportunities available to the county. The concept of economic resilience is addressed throughout the CEDS with actions intended to counter the risks and challenges noted throughout the document.

The Colusa County CEDS adheres to the U.S. Economic Development Guidelines and consists of the following sections and information.

- The first section is a discussion of the process and the **Public Engagement** that served to inform the CEDS.
- **Economic Conditions** is a summary of the economic and socio-economic conditions of the county. The Appendix contains details on the economic data and analysis.
- The **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis** identifies the critical internal and external factors (assets, challenges, and threats) that affect the county's economic development potential. Along with the data analysis, findings from the SWOT lead to and support the strategic direction and actions that focus on leveraging strengths and opportunities, overcoming challenges, and mitigating threats.
- The **Action Plan** contains the county's vision and goals. Implementation is focused on the three priority projects and incorporates existing activities and projects that are components of a thriving community and a strong economic development program, 1) Stable and Growing Sectors, 2) Healthy and Skilled Workforce, and 3) Community and Connectivity.

# CEDS PROCESS

Colusa County launched the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) process in December 2022. The process included:

- stakeholder interviews and public surveys (Appendix A)
- economic analysis (Appendix B)
- a review of relevant plans and studies (Appendix D)
- CEDs Committee meetings (Appendix E)

## CEDS Committee

The Colusa County CEDs Steering committee actively participated in the development of strategies and is committed to leading the implementation of the action items. Committee members are a part of the joint County/Cities economic development meetings that are slated to be resurrected and will serve as the CEDs Operations Team to monitor strategy implementation, accomplishments, and ensure there is a well-coordinated and well-informed local government effort.

Kent Boes Colusa County Supervisor District 3	Michael West Superintendent, Colusa County Office of Education
Daurice Kalfsbeek Smith Colusa County Supervisor District 2 North Central Counties Consortium Board	Denise Conrado City of Colusa Council
Wendy Tyler Colusa County Administrative Officer	Greg Ponciano City of Colusa Council and Mayor
Wayne Mitchum Jr. Chair, Colusa Indian Community Council	Angie O'cañas Hernandez Director, Colusa County OneStop
Amanda Ragudo Vice Chair, Colusa Indian Community Council	Jennifer Diaz Director, Colusa County Chamber of Commerce
Charlie Wright Chair, Kletsel Dehe Band of Wintun Indians	Greg Plucker Colusa County Community Development Director
Kate Dunlap City of Williams Council	

CEDS Committee meetings were held at the Colusa County Board of Supervisors Chambers and at the Colusa Indian Community Council's Event Facility. Meetings consisted of presentations, discussion, and input on economic conditions, SWOT findings and survey results, CEDs goals, strategy focus and approach to action plan implementation.



The draft Colusa County CEDS was emailed to the Colusa County Board of Supervisors and the CEDS Committee for review and comment. The draft was also available at the county and city offices and published on the project website ColusaCountyCEDS.com for public review. The CEDS Committee formally met in September to adopt the CEDS and instructed staff to submit the document to the Economic Development Administration.

## Community Engagement

The CEDS was created with outreach to local and regional partners, residents, businesses, and a comprehensive review of relevant documents and reports. The list of community stakeholders who participated and the relevant documents reviewed are included in the Appendix.

To further facilitate and promote public participation and respect those who prefer to maintain some degree of social distancing, a project website was created as a way for the public to learn about, stay informed and participate in the CEDS process.

Interested parties could access presentation slides and videos, surveys, and plan sections as they were completed. About 60 people subscribed to the website.

A presentation was made at a May 2023 community meeting hosted by the Sites Reservoir Authority to inform committee members and interested community members about the CEDS process and benefits and garner additional input to the CEDS. The Authority is a regional Joint Powers Authority (JPA) pursuing development of an off-stream surface water reservoir in Colusa County that would increase Northern California’s water storage capacity by up to 15 percent. The project is discussed further in the Action Plan section of the CEDS.

Surveys for Colusa County residents, workers, and businesses were posted on the website and promoted via media, social media, email campaigns, and CEDS Committee members. Over 400 residents and workers responded to the surveys. Results of the surveys are provided in the Appendix.

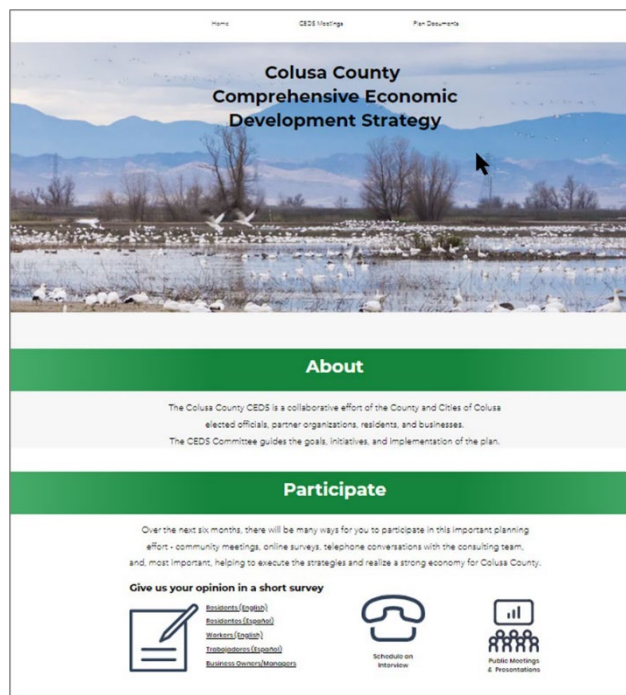


Figure 5. ColusaCountyCEDS.com was created as a way for the public to learn about, stay informed and participate in the CEDS process.

# ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

The CEDS Appendix provides details on Colusa County's economic conditions as it continues to battle un- and under-employment, labor force shortages, persistent poverty rates and housing challenges. This section presents a summary of the data trends and analysis discussed in the Appendix. These findings are based on a review of information gathered from data research, recent studies and plans, interviews, and observations.

## Economic Development Operations

A community's economic development success is dependent on having the support of leadership, a vision for the future, agreed-upon goals, cooperation between governmental agencies, and sufficient financial and human resources to implement an adopted program.

- Elected officials throughout Colusa County support economic development and working cooperatively to implement strategies.
- Jurisdictions are challenged with limited staff and financial resources to implement.
- Without dedicated economic development staff, jurisdictions have relied on civic-minded organizational and business leaders to implement strategies. This approach stretches the ability to implement tasks assertively and consistently.

## Quality of Place

Quality of place is important to economic development because this type of investment helps to attract and retain skilled workers and professionals. Achieving and maintaining a quality community requires continued engagement and ongoing investment in infrastructure and cultural amenities.

- The cost of living in Colusa County is more affordable than statewide; two exceptions are health care and utilities.
- Housing markets in Colusa County have seen a rise in prices in concert with other regional counties, likely a combination of an initial migration from fire-affected areas in Butte County after 2018 and then again due to migration statewide during 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic.
- Colusa County and neighboring counties experienced robust two-year growth in median home prices. This is good news for homeowners but for renters it is an indication of how much more difficult it is to find a home that is affordable for much of the working population.
- The share of owner-occupied homes in Colusa County decreased by about three percentage points between 2017 and 2021 while rented homes increased during that same time; the cost of rentals increased by two percent each year.

- Violent and property crimes reported are on the decline in Colusa County both in real numbers and as a per population rate.
- K-12 enrollment in Colusa County has been declining over 10 academic years and is expected to continue. This decline—a function of an aging population, fewer births, and fewer families moving to the area—can greatly impact school budgets, an important community asset.
- The share of the county’s population with some type of health insurance coverage has improved yet it is still below the state’s 93 percent.
- Colusa County is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- The cities and county of Colusa have designated downtowns, parks, unique venues and events that could be further improved and leveraged to contribute to more growth in the local economy.



*Figure 6. East Park in Colusa County – a sample of the recreational amenities and quality of place in Colusa County.*

## Population

- Colusa County’s population has seen little growth, remaining about 21,000 for the past decade.
- The county gained some population since the pandemic, likely due to an exodus from populated cities into the rural areas and added to by the shadow effect of the Camp Fire in

Butte County in 2018. What is not known with any certainty is the number of workers that have moved to Colusa with remote jobs.

- Colusa County’s population is evenly distributed across age groups, except for the population over 70 years old which accounts for less than 10 percent. Thirty percent of the population is in the younger age group (0 to 19 years). This sector represents the incoming workforce. However, there has been no population growth in this age group since 2000 (see Figure 8).

## Workforce

- Colusa County’s jobs market recovered from the small shock suffered during 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic (as shown earlier in Figure 4) caused in large part by the State shutting down various retail businesses following the lifting of the State closure mandates.
- The larger, and continuing issue is Colusa County’s business’ ability to find workers even with its historically high unemployment numbers. This may be attributed to the small size of the county labor force, seasonal job market, as well as the available skill sets and demographics (age, educational attainment, etc.).

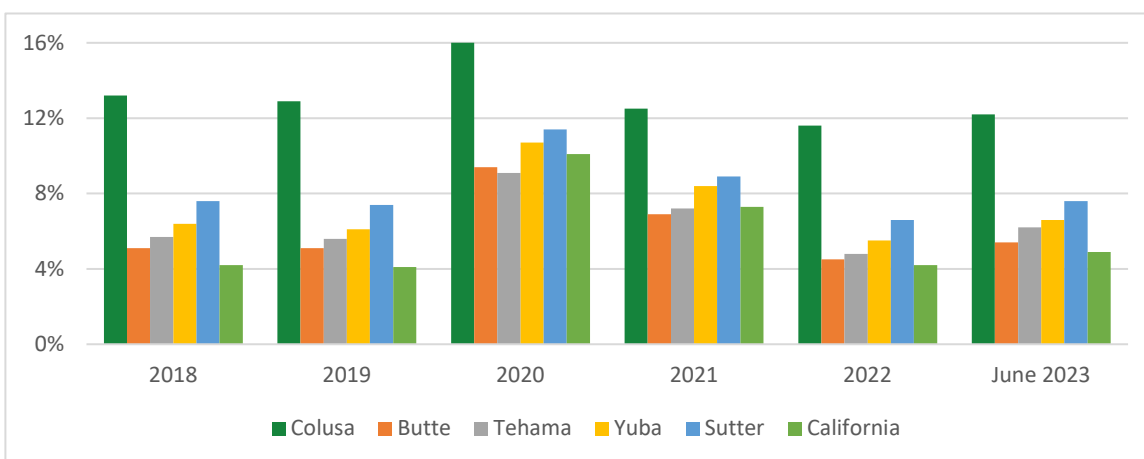


Figure 7. Annual Average (and mid-2023) Unemployment Rates. Source: California Employment Development Department

- Figure 8 shows the growth or decline of four components of the Colusa County labor force. A declining Talent Pipeline (ages 0-19) and Prime Workers (ages 20-39) suggests demographic changes and implies continued challenges for businesses needing employees.
- The increasing older population (ages 60 and older) puts more pressure on the working population to support government and social services with tax dollars.
- The share of the county’s population with at least a high school degree or equivalent is improving and the share of the population with less than a high school education is declining.

There is not yet an equivalent increase in the portion of the population completing higher education and nor in those with two or more years of continuing education.

- The number and percentage of Colusa County high school completers who are enrolling in college is slowly declining, which is in step with statewide data.

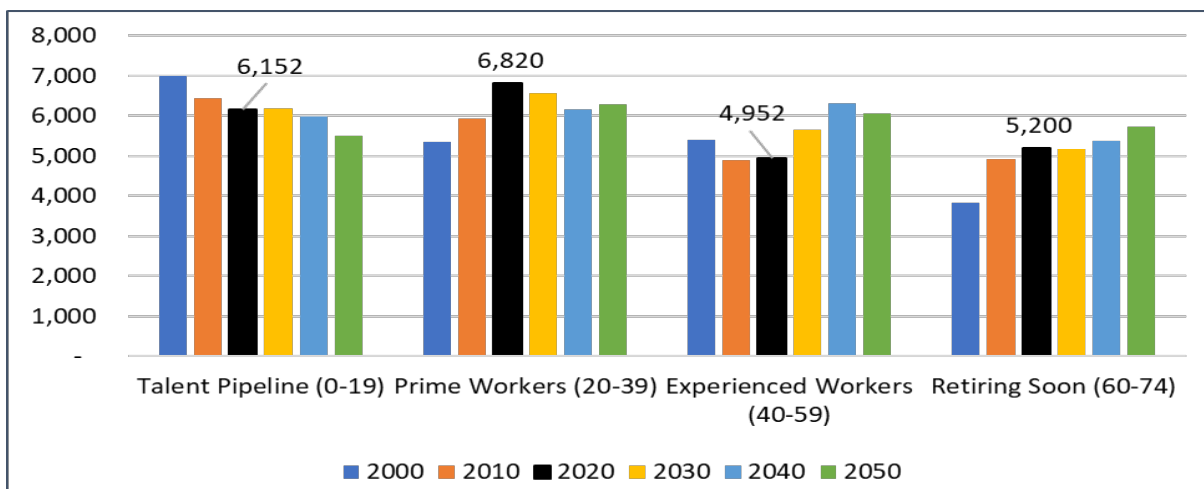


Figure 8. Colusa County's Talent Pipeline. Sources: California Department of Finance, EFA

## Income and Wealth Generation

- Income growth has been slow from 2017 to 2021. Household and per capita incomes kept pace with inflation, but family income did not. This could be attributed to 1) households going from two incomes to one, or 2) new families with less income moving to Colusa.
- The share of families living in poverty remains at just over 10% each year from 2017 to 2021.
- The share of income from earned wages declined by four percentage points from 2017 to 2021 while the share of the population relying on Social Security, supplemental and public assistance increased.
- There are 340 more households on public assistance in 2021 than in 2017.

## Employment and Job Creation

- Data suggest that Colusa County has made its way through the pandemic relatively well and better than the state overall. As mentioned earlier, this can be attributed to County services remaining open during the pandemic when neighboring counties curtailed services and the County's agricultural industry being an essential service that was not shuttered. By

December 2022, most of the major industrial sectors in the county had recovered, except for leisure and hospitality which is in step with the state.

- While jobs are back data show that the types of jobs are not as productive in terms of generating income, again consistent with what is seen throughout California and most of the nation.
- The county has experienced more recovery in terms of the residential labor force and available workers than its regional neighbors; around March 2022, Colusa County regained its labor market and has continued to grow.
- Similar to the residential labor force, employment growth began in May 2020 and continues, suggesting that people who live in Colusa County are working and bringing their incomes and supporting local retailers and other merchants.
- Caveats: it is unknown how many workers are available to local employers, and because the data do not capture the number of self-employed the data is under-reported making the situation in Colusa that much better.

Even having achieved recovery, there is still significant unemployment in Colusa County.

## Economic Drivers

Appendix B presents data that shows that by December 2022, most of the major industrial sectors in Colusa County had recovered from the pandemic and resulting economic challenges. Even though there are positives, many industries in Colusa County continue to struggle with ongoing economic and climate challenges.

## Colusa's Agriculture Industry

Colusa County is a place tied to regional agriculture in terms of its core industry focus. It has a long history of agriculture as a major industry and employer. Almonds, rice, walnuts, and a variety of other fruits and vegetables provide Colusa County with breadth in terms of crops grown locally. Livestock is another important part of the agriculture and related industries in Colusa County, specifically cattle, calves, sheep and lambs. Tomato processing is a link to other parts of the agricultural supply chain that are important now and could become more important to Colusa County's economy over time.

Over 1,000 additional jobs in Colusa County depend on the stability and spending of the agricultural industry.

The multi-year statewide drought has had a greater and longer impact on the county's economy and businesses than the pandemic did. Thousands of farmable acres sit fallow due to drought and water prioritization resulting in more food insecurity, losses in revenue, jobs, and wildlife habitats. As noted in the 2022 documentary [Colusa County Drought Crisis](#), reduced crop production in Colusa County contributed to a substantial economic hit to the state, Sacramento Valley, and Colusa County. Jobs and revenue related to plantings, harvesting, production processing, and shipping were all impacted.

## Jobs

Agriculture represents a large number of jobs in Colusa County. Since 2010, agricultural employment has increased from approximately 20 percent of total jobs in Colusa County to over 35 percent in 2019. The pandemic forced only a slight change (perhaps due to an increase in transportation and logistics jobs) to just under 33 percent as a share. Dips in employment over the longer-term are most likely attributed to the ongoing drought in California.

Many farmers are self-employed and are not counted in these jobs data, so the data in Figure 9 likely undercounts the number of farm workers overall. The economic effects of such a large share of the local economy means many other jobs in Colusa County’s economy depend on the stability and spending of agricultural industries regionally.

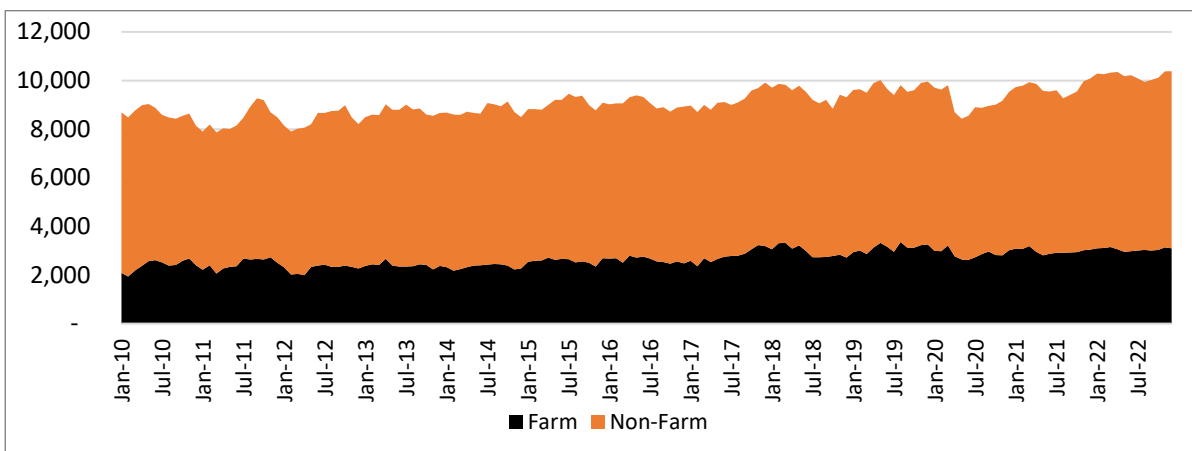


Figure 10. Jobs in Colusa County, Farm and Non-Farm (seasonally adjusted), Jan 2010 to Dec 2022. Source: California EDD, EFA

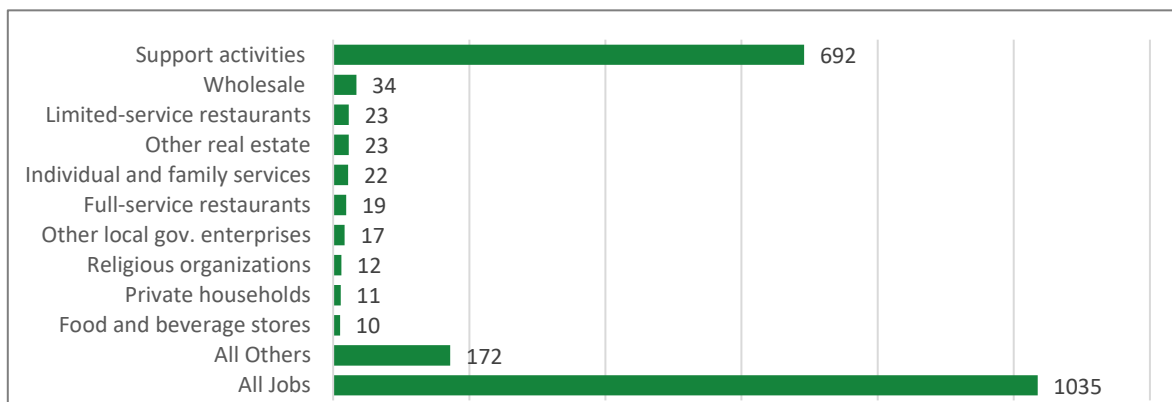


Figure 9. Over 1,000 additional jobs in Colusa County are supported by the 2,510 core agriculture jobs in 2023. The share of jobs based on agriculture are approximately 40% of the total jobs in the county economy. The data in the table come from IMPLAN® for Colusa County. These data use the economic relationships along the agricultural supply chain and how workers and residents across Colusa County spend on other businesses when agricultural jobs are paid wages

## Wages

Rising inflation adds to the economic and climate pressures on employment and wages. Workers may be considering jobs that pay higher wages and areas to live that may be more affordable in housing and living costs. Figure 11 provides a look at agriculture wages for Colusa County in 2022 versus in 2019.

Type of Worker	2019 Median Wage	2022 Median Wage	Difference 2019-22	% Change 2019-22
All Jobs in Colusa County	\$18.89	\$22.92	+ \$4.03	21%
First Line Supervisors of farming, fishing, forestry	\$28.54	\$28.95	+ \$0.41	1%
Agricultural Inspectors	\$18.59	\$21.67	+ \$3.08	16%
Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products	\$11.80	\$15.20	+ \$3.40	28%
Agricultural Equipment Operators	\$14.76	\$18.86	+ \$4.10	27%
Farmworkers/Laborers, crop, nursery, greenhouse	\$11.94	\$15.27	+ \$3.33	28%
Farmworkers, farm, ranch, aquacultural animals	\$14.46	\$18.34	+ \$3.88	27%

Figure 11. Wage comparisons Colusa County Agriculture Jobs, 2019 and 2022. Sources: California EDD, Bureau of Labor Statistics, EFA

## Revenue

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) publishes farming revenues and costs to describe how agricultural businesses sustain themselves financially and where some expenses may be rising quickly. Figure 12 shows these estimations for Colusa County. What these tell is the fade in consistent returns (the mix of profitable farm businesses, wages paid to farmers and additional benefits from paying wages, including retirement and medical insurance). This may also underscore issues from the extreme drought and general volatility in world markets.

Farm earnings in Colusa County fell nearly 44% from 2017 to 2021 (Figure 12) most likely due a combination of the pandemic and extended drought conditions.

Notice 2020 was a solid year during the largest problems of the pandemic (where food resiliency was a key issue) and then down again in 2021 as the world re-opened. The data available for Colusa County suggests that farmers continue to operate, there are agriculturally related jobs available, and a portion of core agriculture remains in Colusa County, but some of the other supply chain connections may have become smaller or left the county, hence not capturing as much income.



Continuing challenges faced by those in this industry are drought, lack of labor resources, rising costs of doing business (many farms are small businesses), an aging workforce, aging landowners and farmers and ever-increasing regulations imposed by the State.

Revenue or Expenses	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Cash receipts and other income</b>	<b>\$608,163,300</b>	<b>\$599,255,700</b>	<b>\$610,826,500</b>	<b>\$636,375,800</b>	<b>\$530,636,800</b>
Less: Production expenses	\$491,703,600	\$460,143,600	\$520,243,700	\$511,540,700	\$458,963,400
Equals: Realized net income	\$116,459,800	\$139,112,000	\$90,582,900	\$124,835,000	\$71,673,400
Plus: Value of inventory change	\$(80,687,000)	\$(39,791,900)	\$(84,707,600)	\$(56,582,900)	\$(73,948,900)
Equals: Net income including corporate farms	\$35,772,700	\$99,320,200	\$5,875,300	\$68,252,100	\$(2,275,500)
Less: Net income of corporate farms	\$1,750,300	\$12,547,300	\$578,400	\$8,728,500	\$(356,600)
Plus: Statistical adjustment	\$(900)	\$-	\$-	\$900	\$(800)
Equals: Farm proprietors' income	\$34,021,500	\$86,772,900	\$5,296,900	\$59,524,500	\$(1,919,700)
Plus: Farm wages and salaries	\$67,917,900	\$53,512,800	\$68,189,700	\$67,321,300	\$52,719,000
Plus: Farm supplements to wages and salaries	\$16,186,900	\$12,150,000	\$13,770,400	\$12,589,200	\$15,520,100
<b>Equals: Farm earnings</b>	<b>\$118,126,300</b>	<b>\$152,435,600</b>	<b>\$87,257,100</b>	<b>\$139,435,000</b>	<b>\$66,319,400</b>

Figure 12. Estimated Farm Revenues and Expenses, Colusa County 2017-2021 (2012 Dollars). Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis, EFA (Inflation has been removed from data)

## Manufacturing and Distribution

Much of Colusa County's economic base is weighted to population serving industries. These include businesses that provide goods and services to residents; primarily retail, medical care, and personal care. These businesses tend to re-circulate dollars unlike the traded sector—manufacturing and distribution—which exports goods and imports new dollars into the economy.

County leadership recognizes the importance of strengthening and growing the traded sector as these businesses purchase raw materials, use local services (e.g. machine shops) further supporting local hiring. Traded sector businesses also tend to offer higher wages which adds to disposable incomes and enables workers and residents to increase spending on household items. Wages in these industries range from entry-level to over \$30 per hour for the more skilled occupations.

Industry	Establishments			Employment		
	2019	2022	% Change 2019-22	2019	2022	% Change 2019-22
Manufacturing	31	31	0%	1,316	982	-25%
Wholesale	33	28	-15%	595	576	-3%
Transp. Warehouse	35	51	46%	176	247	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>2,087</b>	<b>1,805</b>	<b>-14%</b>

Figure 13. Distribution of the traded sector industry in Colusa County. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Annual Average Establishments and Employment ([www.bls.gov/cew](http://www.bls.gov/cew))

Opportunities exist for Colusa County to expand its manufacturing and distribution sector especially as these industries are strongly connected to the agriculture and natural resources industries and economies. Colusa County’s location means a large amount of freight and people already move through the area on I-5.

Prospects are good for Colusa County to become a hub for manufacturing and logistics given its location along Interstate 5, its proximity to larger north valley and bay area markets. Colusa’s proximity to the Sacramento and Bay Area metro regions gives businesses easy access to national and international markets via several airports and shipping ports. This is evidenced by the fact that Colusa County already exports dozens of commodities and seeds around the world.

Aymium Production Facility—repurposing a vacant manufacturing facility in Colusa County into a renewable biocarbon production facility that uses patented technology to convert sustainably sourced biomass from local ranches and orchards into renewable biocarbon pellets. The facility is expected to create 65 clean-tech jobs, generate and export renewable electricity to the grid, and significantly reduce regional air emissions.

## Energy Production

Additional traded-sector opportunities may be realized in Colusa County by becoming a regional hub for renewables—research, manufacturing, distribution, or energy generation. Its geographic position in the North Valley, low-density population, developable sites in rural areas, and the evolution of renewable energy technology and generation provides opportunity. Sustainable and experimental agriculture, tied to programs at CSU Chico or UC Davis or both, is where the nexus of research, production, manufacturing, processing, distribution, retail and tourism could help Colusa County.

## Tourism and Recreation

Like the traded sector, the tourism industry imports dollars into the economy. Because recreation is an important local asset, expanding the visitor serving sector will help strengthen and diversify the economy. While this sector—leisure, hospitality, and some retail—does not always offer higher-paying or skilled jobs it is an important industry sector in that it is often where people who are entering the workforce (students and new graduates) or transitioning into or between jobs can find employment and gain skills.

Colusa County’s Travel-Related Economy	Travel-Related Spending	Travel-Related Employment	Earnings Impacted by Travel
Accommodations	\$9,450,506	330	\$8,360,488
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	\$6,601,812	214	\$3,129,351
Food Service & Stores	\$17,961,271	n/a	n/a
Local Transportation, Gas	\$4,744,803	16	\$294,632
Retail Sales	\$7,005,460	56	\$2,131,532
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$45,763,852</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>\$13,916,003</b>

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Figure 14. Source: *Economic Impact of Travel in California 2013-2022; Visit California*

The tourism and recreation industry also adds to local revenue through spending and sales tax. The state and local tax revenue generated in Colusa County by the visitor industry is estimated to be \$3.9 million according to Visit California's 2022 *Economic Impact of Travel in California 2013-2022* report.

Within Colusa County, there is a wealth of natural features to visit, see and experience. From mountains to lakes, rivers to wetlands, Colusa County has a natural geography that makes it the perfect playground for travelers. These notable destinations provide recreational opportunities

### **East Park Reservoir**

Built in 1910 the reservoir serves both agriculture and tourism. The dam, spillway and recreation areas are located in and around the communities of Stonyford and Lodoga in northwest Colusa County. Visitors have access to 1,630 acres of public lands, over 100 campsites, and 1,820 acres of water for sport and recreation e.g., camping, boon dock camping, boating, skiing, wildlife and wildflower viewing, music festivals and events as it offers enough open space to accommodate hundreds of patrons.

Visitors to East Park come from Colusa and surrounding counties, from the Bay Area and throughout northern California. The camping season is from mid-April through mid-October. Primary use is during the months of May, June and July, averaging nearly 1,500 during the three-month period.

### **The Sacramento River**

The Sacramento River, the largest river in California, flows through 19 California Counties, Colusa included. The county's history as a hub of agriculture and shipping along the Sacramento River and the river's connection to the California Gold Rush has resulted in many historic venues along the river's path including historic homes, buildings, and museums, e.g., Sacramento Valley Museum, the Stonyford Museum, and the historic County Courthouse.

The Colusa Sacramento River State Recreation Area has campsites, picnic sites, and small boat launch ramps. The river is on a major migratory route for the Pacific flyway making it popular for birding as well as for hiking, fishing, swimming, kayaking, and other outdoor recreation.

### **Mendocino National Forest**

The 900,000-acre Mendocino National Forest spans 65 miles long and 35 miles wide. Portions of the Forest are located in western Colusa County, near Stonyford. Besides Colusa County, parts of the Forest are located in Lake, Glenn, Mendocino, Tehama, and Trinity Counties. Forest headquarters and a local ranger district office are located in Glenn and Colusa counties (Willows and Stonyford respectively). Recreation sites in or nearest to Colusa County are:

- The Stonyford Recreation Area – over 200 miles of off-highway vehicle (OHV) routes ranging in elevation from 1,700 to 6,000 feet; other activities are camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, boating, and swimming

- Snow Mountain Wilderness – is 23 acres of wilderness established in 1984; it is home to the largest known waterfall on the Forest and offers 40 miles of trails, remote hiking, fishing, horseback riding, and camping
- Upper Lake Recreation Area – has 135 miles of OHV system trails and roads, camping, fishing, and horseback riding
- Lake Pillsbury – the largest lake on the Forest measures about 2,280 acres of surface area and 31 miles of shoreline; activities include camping, fishing, OHV riding, picnic areas, boating, and swimming

### **Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex**

The Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex is headquartered in Williams (Colusa County) and includes both Refuges and Wildlife Management Areas. These areas offer picnic areas, birding and photography platforms, hiking, biking, hunting, driving tour, walking trails, and opportunities for environmental education. Included in the complex are:

- Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (Glenn and Colusa Counties, south of Willows)
- Delevan National Wildlife Refuge (Colusa County east of Maxwell)
- Colusa National Wildlife Refuge (between the towns of Colusa and Williams)
- Butte Sink Wildlife Management Area (Colusa County northeast of the town of Colusa)
- Sutter National Wildlife Refuge (southwest of Yuba City)
- North Central Valley Wildlife Management Area
- Willow Creek-Lurline Wildlife Management Area

### **Additional Visitor Venues and Opportunities**

The City of Williams is already a well-known stop on Interstate 5 and a place where tourism and visitor markets could expand. The ultimate development of Sites Reservoir could be an opportunity for Colusa County to add even more to its recreational venues.

In order to help provide the necessary services, a focused collaborative plan that includes workforce training, schools, and area hotels, casinos, and other visitor places would help to increase and diversify the tourism sector in Colusa County.

## **Development Opportunities**

Colusa County’s central location and access to interstate and state highways make it an attractive location for development. Several major markets, airports, and ports are readily accessible e.g., Sacramento (65 miles), Stockton (112 miles), San Francisco (120 miles), San Jose (150 miles), and Reno (192 miles). Interstate 5 (I-5), the major north/south corridor on the west coast, bisects the county and the more-populated communities are located on I-5.

Realizing that economic development potential depends upon balancing residential and industrial development, ensuring a supply of market-ready sites, and securing funding for infrastructure, it is important that the cities and county of Colusa identify and prioritize areas for small business, industrial, commercial, and housing development. The following information provides a summary of this effort that has taken place to date.

## Downtowns

The downtowns in Colusa County are home to both national chain retailers, locally owned and well-supported small businesses, and enduring community events.

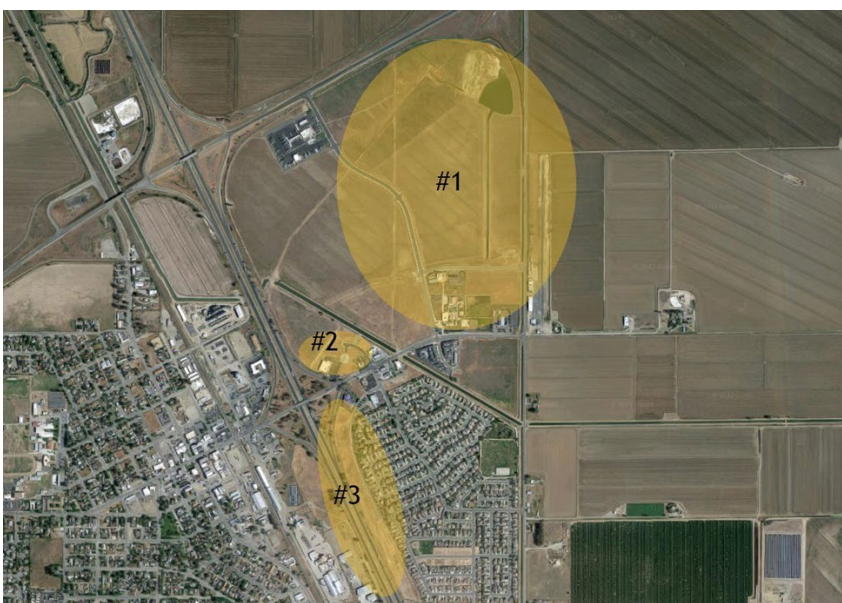
The City of Colusa invested in a Downtown Economic Development Plan in 2012 for a 115-acre downtown core. The plan's overall objective is to capitalize on the features within and bordering the downtown—Sacramento River, State Highways 20 and 45, and the Colusa Recreation Area.

The City of Williams' designated downtown area is about 14 city blocks. The city's 2012 General Plan calls for infill development in the downtown area and eventually expanded boundaries to improve connections to the surrounding residential areas.

Goals of the Colusa County General Plan include supporting the revitalization of the downtown areas in unincorporated areas of the county by encouraging and supporting development of vacant and underutilized parcels, mixed use developments, preservation and use of historic structures, highway commercial development, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.

## City of Williams

Three priority development areas in the City of Williams are primarily market-ready and zoned for business park, industrial, and commercial uses. Each site is on or easily accessible from I-5 and Highway 20.



*Figure 15. Three development sites in the City of Williams. (1) +/- 300 acres zoned for business park; (2) four acres zoned for industrial uses; (3) six acres zoned for commercial uses*

## City of Colusa

Two development areas in the City of Colusa are the 450-acre Colusa Industrial Park (CIP) which is about 50 percent developed and currently has two vacant buildings. Primary industries in the park are food processing, storage, light and heavy manufacturing. Additionally, the city recently acquired the former Pirelli Cable plant (below) located on Highway 20 in south Colusa and plans to renovate, upgrade, and convert the 200,000 square foot building into a manufacturing hub for entrepreneurs and to support value added agricultural production.



## Housing Developments

City of Colusa—a 180 lot subdivision has sold 51 single-family homes and 20 more are under construction; prices range from \$450,000 to \$600,000

City of Colusa—108 acres west of the Colusa Golf Club are planned for residential development and will include a mix of worker-affordable single family, four-plex, and apartments; and about 20 acres are slated for higher density development. The project is in the entitlement process.

City of Williams—103 lot subdivision is planned for market rate and worker-affordable single-family homes ranging from 1,200 to 1,700 square feet; and a 32-room senior housing project was recently approved.

## Capital Improvement Projects

Critical to Colusa County's continuing recovery and economic stability is the quality and capacity of municipal infrastructure. The cities and county of Colusa planned the following capital improvement projects to provide a safe environment for residents, workers, and businesses. Listed below are

nearly \$200 million of infrastructure and capital improvement that will support job and economic growth, improve resiliency and safety throughout the cities and county of Colusa.

## **Planned / Approved**

- Roadway improvement projects are identified in the County Regional Transportation Plan (2018), are slated to be completed by 2042; they include 1) roadway reconstructions and overlay projects, structural and drainage improvements, roadway extensions and widening; 2) intersection improvements; 3) sidewalk and handicap ramps around Bridge, Main, Sioc and 12th Streets; 4) seven bridge improvements
- City of Williams is partnering with Caltrans on safety improvements at Highway 20 and Marguerite Street
- Upgrades to Williams' public transportation service and add feeder routes
- City of Williams' new water plan is underway and expected to be completed summer 2023
- City of Williams, in partnership with the Department of Water Resources, is drilling new wells
- City of Williams Valley Vista Park upgrades

## **Pending**

- Colusa County has applied for \$500,000 in REAP 2.0 grant funding to support the Rancho Colusa Phase II affordable housing project
- Colusa County has applied for \$1,906,513 in REAP 2.0 grant funding to support the construction of area-wide circulation improvements for a five-acre infill affordable rental housing project in the City of Williams
- City of Colusa has applied to California Housing and Community Development (HCD) for \$4.3 million to make ADA accessibility improvements to critical intersections throughout the city e.g., near schools and downtown
- City of Colusa's Bikeway Master Plan estimates \$8 million for implementation
- City of Colusa applied for \$1 million funding for improvements to Sankey Park in central Colusa which include improving access and playground equipment for ADA accessibility
- City of Colusa has \$10 million planned for upgrades to the Colusa Levee Scenic Park to allow for ADA access to the Sacramento River and improved fishing access
- City of Williams made application to State Water Resource Control Board for a \$30 million grant to upgrade wastewater system
- City of Colusa made application to State Water Resource Control Board for \$45 million to fund water and wastewater system improvements

# STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS (SWOT)

The SWOT is an important component of the CEDS as it identifies the county's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). This information is generated from public engagement, public documents and research, and data collection and analysis and is the basis for the CEDS goals, strategic direction, and action plan.

## STRENGTHS

- Signs of recovery from pandemic; county regained its labor market and jobs ahead of neighboring communities and most industrial sectors show recovery
- Central location and access to metro markets via interstate and state highways
- Median age is younger than state (35 vs. 37)
- Population is diverse when looking at ethnicity, 62% identify as Hispanic or Latino
- More affordable cost of living compared to state and nation
- Growth in median home prices; can also be considered a challenge for new home buyers
- Access to outdoor recreation venues
- Community engagement

## WEAKNESSES

- Population and talent pipeline growth historically flat; ages 0-19 declining, older population growing
- Declining K-12 enrollment
- Unlike ethnic diversity, racial diversity in county is low; the majority identify as white
- Medically underserved area
- Source of income from wages declining; income from SS, SSI & public assistance increasing
- Population with H.S. education increased slightly but higher levels of education flat
- Economic base is weighted to population-serving industries vs. traded sector
- Historically high unemployment and dependence on seasonal agricultural employment
- Critical infrastructure needs (roadways, broadband, downtown improvements)
- Aversion to change
- Limited human and financial resources to support economic development and programs implementation



## OPPORTUNITIES

- County's location and agricultural industry may support expanding food manufacturing and distribution
- Sustainable and experimental agricultural research, production, processing (UCCE)
- Sites Reservoir project for water storage and management
- Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF), Sacramento Region
- Energy production, distribution, research
- Existing venues could be further leveraged to support a more robust visitor industry (waterways, nature preserve, casinos, restaurant, history)
- Available land for industrial and housing development sites

## THREATS

- Natural disasters e.g., wildfires, drought, flooding
- Economic shifts
- Inconsistent performance of the county's primary industry (agriculture) due to rising costs, weather, supply chain issues, available labor
- Increasing regulatory challenges throughout the state and nation
- The State's continued lack of support for the Williamson Act Program

# ACTION PLAN

The Colusa County CEDS Action Plan is designed as a collaborative effort to build and maintain a stable economy, increase commerce and employment options.

Colusa County and its cities are limited in the financial and human resources available for economic development but there is a long history of collaboration on projects and activities. Until more resources are consistently available, the Colusa County CEDS relies on this history of collaboration, established and new partnerships to implement practical economic development strategies, enhance resiliency and support business growth until more resources are available.

## Vision

Adopted in the Colusa County 2030 General Plan are the following guiding principles which shape decisions on growth, development and resources in a manner consistent with the quality of life desired by the county's residents and businesses.

- Maintain the county's rural character and quality of life
- Focus new development in and around existing communities
- Ensure that growth is orderly
- Preserve and enhance the county's agricultural heritage
- Provide opportunities for the expansion of existing businesses and attraction of a diverse range of businesses that provide high-quality jobs
- Promote a broader range of industries that support the county's agricultural uses
- Provide the young people in the county a future, in terms of employment and housing opportunities
- Ensure that adequate infrastructure is available to serve existing and new development

## Goals

1. Diversify the county's economic base to secure and maintain long-term economic growth and provide living-wage jobs for current and future residents while preserving and enhancing agriculture, the county's primary economic sector and resource.
2. Increase resources to implement economic development strategies and to improve and maintain the physical and social infrastructure that supports safe and healthy communities.
3. Preserve and balance the county's rural values with the improvement of social, cultural, and natural assets.

# Focus Areas

Three priority projects, or focus areas, have been identified as having the greatest potential for success and regional economic impact. These projects are supported and will be implemented by a variety of state, regional, and local organizations, and agencies.

## I-5 Corridor Development

An important potential development collaboration was identified through this CEDS process. The 3CORE EDA district (Butte, Glenn, and Tehama Counties) recently commissioned a feasibility study to identify candidate sites for new commercial and industrial development along the I-5 corridor in Glenn and Tehama counties, north of Colusa County. This work correlates well with the priority sites and development plans in Colusa County communities and opens opportunities for a larger regional economic development collaboration.

These rural communities along the northern I-5 corridor are similar in size (1,100 to 2,900 square miles), population (21,000 to 64,000), economies (\$300 to \$800 million in ag production), and workforce skills.

Also common to these counties is the limited resources for economic development. Where possible, engaging in joint efforts on planning, funding, and marketing would advance the entire region’s economic development efforts which ultimately benefits Colusa County and 3CORE EDA District members Glenn and Tehama Counties.

### Target Industries / Uses

The best uses for the I-5 corridor sites are those that will generate significant economic return, expand and diversify the economy, support existing industry, and provide jobs for the local workforce. Opportunities exist to expand the following target industries in Colusa County.

**Agriculture Technology / Research** encompasses a wide variety of ag-related innovation and advanced technologies in manufacturing, processing, and related services to improve yield, efficiency, safety, and profitability in all phases of agriculture including seed production, planting,

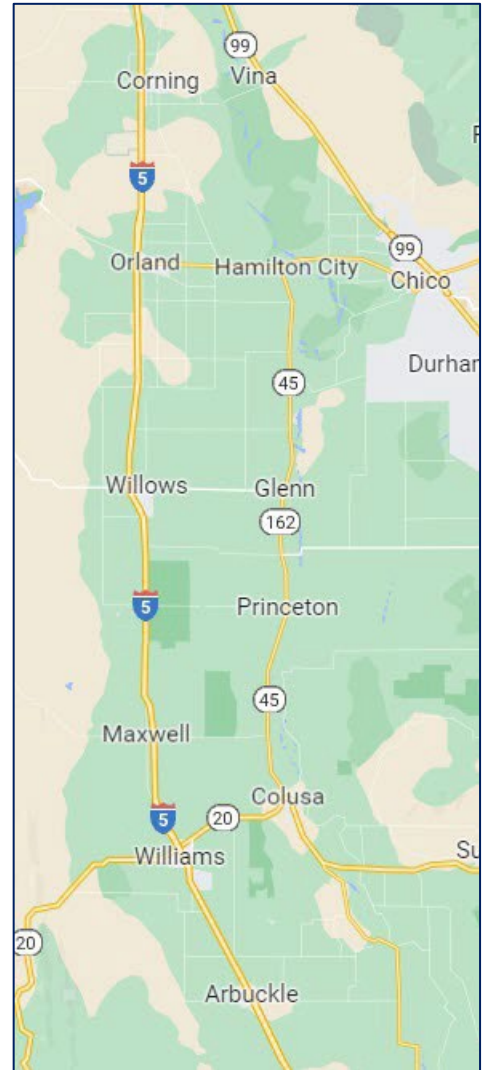


Figure 16. Approximate 70-mile stretch of Interstate-5 includes Tehama, Glenn and Colusa Counties’ I-5 Development Opportunities

irrigation, harvesting, storing, production, processing, robotics, temperature or moisture sensors, soil analysis, crop monitoring, pest management, and aerial imaging with GPS or drones.

- Development and adoption of agricultural technology is rapidly evolving, and California is the center of innovation. According to a recent article, ag tech is “among the six industries most critical to the state’s economic future”<sup>3</sup>
- Colusa County has an existing relationship with the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE)
- Proximity to higher education campuses in Chico, Davis, and Sacramento
- Ag Tech/Research operations support the existing agriculture (and other) employers in the county, many of whom are already using these technologies or could be appropriate field research sites

**Cold Storage Facilities** are an essential part of the global supply chain and a necessity for several industries. This segment of the warehousing and distribution industry provides storage for products and materials that require some form of temperature control—ag products and raw materials, food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, seed, flowers, herbs, and other perishables. Among the factors driving the demand is e-commerce, direct to consumer delivery of healthy, fresh food, and the need for resilient and redundant inventory storage.

- There is strong demand for contract cold storage throughout the state and Colusa County’s location on I-5 coupled with the convenient access to international airports and ports could make it a preferred location for investment
- A Colusa County storage and distribution facility can easily serve several urban metro areas at a much lower cost and cold storage facilities near major population centers typically have steady utilization rates
- Many of the existing cold storage facilities in the state and nation are relatively old, built prior to 1990
- Cold storage facilities are apt to use more (and different) technology than traditional dry warehouses, thereby offering more skilled and higher-paying jobs
- A facility of this sort supports the needs of businesses in the county and in the region

**General and ag-related manufacturing** and services operations such as welding, metal fabrication, machine shops, equipment and vehicle repair, would be a support to existing agricultural and other operations in the region.

- Colusa County’s workforce should be able to support small- to mid-sized operations
- These operations would provide a range of low- mid- and higher-skilled jobs that are supported by training programs in the Colusa County region

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<sup>3</sup> Kotkin, Joel and Toplansky, Marshall. “Why Agriculture is the Key to California’s Future in Tech.” *New Geography* (newgeography.com). Article posted 7/2/2023

- Operations could easily serve a wide geographic region including several larger metro areas at a much lower cost

**Clean Technology** is closely aligned to the manufacturing or advanced manufacturing industry sector. The term used to describe companies involved in energy, water, transportation, agriculture, and manufacturing using technology and processes to improve the long-term health of the environment. While this can include a broad range of industry sectors, the focus would be to develop clean industries to supplement the county's agricultural base, such as the conversion of agricultural by-products into renewable energy.

- Could support existing employers in the region many of whom may already be using some type of advanced technologies
- These operations would provide a range of low- mid- and higher-skilled jobs that are supported by training programs in the Colusa County region. A broad array of occupations are involved in cleantech, from highly degreed professionals (engineers, IT) to skilled trades (installers, technician) and to lower skilled manufacturing and logistics workers

## **Subject Sites**

The I-5 sites identified for near-term commercial and industrial development in the region total approximately 1,500 acres.

- The City of Williams identified about 300 acres on the corridor as a priority development area. Sites are market-ready and zoned for business park, industrial, and commercial uses.
- Approximately 1,000 more acres are zoned for light or heavy industrial development and highway service commercial uses in Colusa County's unincorporated communities of Maxwell and Arbuckle. These sites require infrastructure to be market ready. Williams, Maxwell, and Arbuckle zoning maps are included in the Appendix.
- In the 3CORE EDA District, 203 acres have been identified as near-term development sites for target industries that align with those recommended for the Colusa County sites— agriculture-related manufacturing and services, cold storage, light industrial, general manufacturing, and logistics.

## Sites Reservoir

The [Sites Reservoir Project](#) (Sites) is an off-stream surface water reservoir that will capture and store stormwater flows from the Sacramento River making water available to farms, ranches, and other users during extended droughts.

Managed by the Sites Reservoir Authority, a regional Joint Powers Authority (JPA), development of the off-stream surface water reservoir in Colusa County would increase Northern California's water storage capacity by up to 15 percent.

Although the exact amount of available water will vary year to year, it is estimated that an annual average of at least 658,000 acre-feet of water would be available for Sites, and that there are years where the full capacity of Sites Reservoir, 1.5 million acre-feet, would be available for diversion and storage in Sites Reservoir.

This project will enhance the state's management system for maximizing the capture of flood flows while minimizing impacts to the region. Sites Reservoir will not be subject to traditional winter flood control releases, like Shasta and Oroville, which adds resiliency during long, dry periods that often follow a wet winter.

Ancillary development surrounding the project could also provide other economic benefits to the county and the region's manufacturing, commercial, and visitor industries.

The majority of the reservoir and related facilities—dams, dikes, a regulating reservoir, pump stations, power generation facilities, and associated pipelines—would be located in Colusa County. The Sites Project Authority is headquartered in the Colusa County community of Maxwell.

The \$3.9 billion multi-year project is supported by local water districts, community leaders, residents, state water managers and water agencies from the Bay Area to Southern California. Conservation organizations are also in favor of the project because of the help it will provide to migratory birds, fish, and other wildlife.

Despite the significant benefits and wide-spread support, there is still the challenging state and federal environmental permitting process to complete as well as constructing the supporting infrastructure required.



*Figure 17. The Sites Reservoir project will increase water supply flexibility, reliability, and resiliency in dry years. Sites is operating in coordination with other Northern California reservoirs such as Shasta, Oroville, and Folsom—the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project.*

Colusa County, as the primary land use authority, is key to facilitating the development process, transportation and communications infrastructure to support the construction and operation of Sites. Transportation improvements include road and bridge construction and improvements, cell and communications towers, and environmental mitigation activities.

The regional economic impact of the construction phase alone is expected to be substantial and would allow Colusa County to reap a percentage of the impact through new jobs, local spending and increased tax revenues. The County could benefit further by capitalizing on the opportunity to expand its tourism industry through ancillary development of commercial, visitor and recreational venues surrounding the Sites project by the county or by private developers.

## Local Business Development

Small businesses are a critical part of the U.S. economy especially in rural areas. Businesses with less than 20 employees account for 85 percent of all employers according to the U.S. Census Bureau 2000 County Business Patterns. Colusa County is no different, 88 percent of businesses have fewer than 20 employees and nearly 60 percent have fewer than five employees.

This entrepreneurial drive may be what helped Colusa County endure the recent economic hits and what sustains the area’s resiliency. Supporting and protecting this drive and spirit is a priority of the Colusa County CEDS. Building on the network of organizations and agencies that offer technical assistance, training, and resources to area businesses and startups offers a substantial return on investment by

- providing consistent help local entrepreneurs need to achieve success
- more fully supporting the startup and expansion of local small businesses
- growing the overall economy when locally generated profits stay local and are spent and reinvested locally

Jurisdictions and service providers throughout Colusa County are committed to strengthening and broadening the existing network of service providers to ensure there is a strong small businesses and entrepreneurial ecosystem.

As development projects progress in Colusa County and along I-5, communities will see even more attention from regional and national retailers and commercial developers. Critical to taking advantage of demand for more retail and services is having a strong network of support and assistance programs as well as investing in place development.

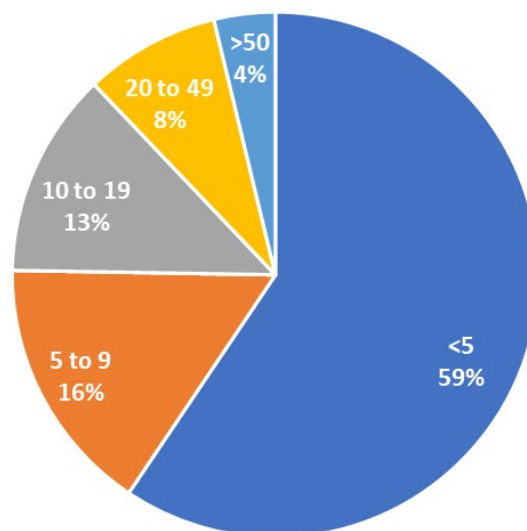


Figure 18. Colusa County Business by Employment Size (Source: U.S. Census County Business Patterns, 2000 data)

## **Small Business Assistance**

The **Colusa County Chamber of Commerce**, working with a limited staff and budget, provides services to its members by partnering with jurisdictions, economic and workforce development partners. The chamber helps to promote events, disseminate information, and provides space for meetings, workshops and business counseling.

The **Butte College Small Business Development Center (SBDC)** recently expanded its services to Colusa County and offers both virtual and in-person training and counseling. The SBDC partners with jurisdictions, community-based organizations, and lenders to connect with businesses. Plans are to increase outreach to the unincorporated communities, and establish rotating locations throughout the County so all county businesses can more easily access SBDC services and assistance.

**Woodland Community College** services Colusa County students and businesses. Among the college's workforce and training programs is LAEP—Learning Aligned Employment Program. This program provides paid positions to low-income students. The program is open to students living in Colusa County who are enrolled in at least six units. Students are placed in employment positions within their career pathway and employers are reimbursed for 90% of the student's wages.

**Colusa County One-Stop** works closely with the Colusa County Office of Education, local businesses, and workers to provide training and skills needed for employment. The One-Stop has established a substantial network of training providers throughout the Sacramento area which enables them to offer more training in diverse work skills. Ideally, these courses would be held within Colusa County which would eliminate barriers participants face, e.g. transportation, childcare. Broadening their offerings depends on additional financial resources and training personnel.

**Colusa County Partnership** manages loan programs and provides technical assistance to Colusa County businesses. Loan programs include USDA Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP) which makes loans for up to \$50,000 and the USDA Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) which makes loans for up to \$150,000.

## **Placemaking**

Quality of Place is another critical aspect achieving small business success, gaining the attention of developers, attracting visitors, and attracting and retaining a quality workforce. Some of the popular visitor and recreational attractions in Colusa County are on the outskirts of the county and it is important to local business' success that visitors to these attractions are connected to (aware of) shopping, dining, and other services in downtowns and other commercial areas. Placemaking infrastructure important to residents, workers, and visitors include:

- a clean and safe environment
- hospitable and quality service
- pedestrian-friendly areas and amenities (wayfinding signage, places to sit and relax)
- high-speed connectivity
- readily available and safe places to park
- public restrooms
- easily accessible information on event, attractions, visitor services
- main street programs



# Implementation

The Colusa County CEDS Action Plan incorporates existing activities and projects with new opportunities, depends on a proactive, collaborative and regional approach to implementation and focuses on three components of that make a community prosperous—Stable and Growing Sectors, Healthy and Skilled Workforce, and Community and Connectivity.

## Management and Coordination

- Consider establishing a new staff position—Economic Development Projects Manager—in the County’s Community Development Department to coordinate CEDS implementation, development projects, track funding opportunities, apply and manage grants.
- A primary and fundamental action item is to resume the multi-jurisdictional economic development meetings where economic development partners and stakeholders share information and coordinate projects and CEDS implementation.
- Expand membership to include workforce development, small business partners, and education.
- Schedule regular, agenized meetings and reporting protocol to keep all jurisdictions and partners fully informed and on task.
- Prioritize recommendations and identify lead and partner organizations.
- Implement a solution to monitoring and managing implementation and goal achievement e.g., software and online tools are available at low cost; an alternative is a simple Excel document to track tasks and performance metrics.
- Collaborate with county and with regional partners on grant funding applications and implementation.
- Stay actively engaged with the CERF initiative to keep Colusa County’s goals, priorities, and projects in front of the convening organization. The CERF initiative could identify resources and other partnerships that would help move the Colusa County CEDS projects and priorities forward.

## Stable and Growing Sectors

A stable and balanced economic base will bring wealth into the cities and county of Colusa, create employment and support the overall economy.

- Continue providing support and assistance to development projects currently underway. Realization of these projects may create higher-wage jobs for the Colusa County workforce, provide direct and indirect economic impact to local businesses and will help with climate and water security for the region.
- Monitor funding opportunities for capital improvement projects.

## **Agriculture, Manufacturing, and Distribution**

- Pursue a regional collaboration with neighboring counties to plan, provide infrastructure, and market I-5 Corridor sites thereby advancing opportunities to diversify and expand the region’s traded sector economy—agriculture, ag-tech and research, manufacturing, logistics, and renewables.
- Revisit, update, and expand the 2019 *Feasibility Analysis and Business Case for a Potential Cold Storage Facility* conducted by Morrison for the City of Willows to include Colusa County sites.
- Continue to track funding sources to support plans to establish an agricultural and manufacturing hub at the former Pirelli Cable building. This effort also supports small business and entrepreneurial development.
- Pursue opportunities to develop or expand sustainable and experimental agriculture with California State University Chico or University of California Davis or both; e.g. research, farm labs, testing on production, manufacturing, and processing.
- Determine the number of acres that may be available for development surrounding the Sites Reservoir. Facilitate discussions with owners of adjacent and nearby lands on their willingness to sell or develop their property for job-creating, visitor, or recreational uses. Incorporate prospective developments into the County’s longer-term development opportunities and capital improvements plan.

## **Tourism and Recreation**

- Prepare a “developer package” to present the potential for commercial and visitor-related development and venues in Colusa County.
- Further develop the County’s website visitors page to connect the recreational venues via a map, day-trip itineraries, etc. Include waterways, nature preserve, trails, parks, casinos, restaurants, theaters, and historic sites.
- Provide financial and human resources to support expanding the Chamber of Commerce to also be a location to access visitor information.
- In lieu of formal visitor kiosks, encourage business owners to carry and promote visitor and event information. Create a Colusa County branded informational poster, series of posters, or small brochure available in print and digital.
- Work with local businesses to train front-line employees on how to promote the visitor and recreational features in Colusa County—everyone is an ambassador. Encourage employees to engage customers in conversations that lead to further discussion and chance to promote venues, i.e. “have you visited...” “you should consider coming back to attend...”
- Encourage amateur photographers to document events and build a photo library for shared use on community and visitor websites and social media.

## **Small Business**

- The Colusa County Chamber of Commerce is the recognized source for business assistance in the County. Strengthen this resource by assisting the Chamber in grant funding applications, where possible, to help ensure it is fully staffed, five or six days a week, and able to provide support to local businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Strengthen the partnership with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) by providing counseling and training space, assistance with marketing and outreach to local businesses.
- Work with Chamber to explore methods to expand its presence and activity throughout the County to ensure that it is recognized as a county-wide business services organization. This will ensure small businesses and entrepreneurs throughout Colusa County have access to information, technical assistance, training and other support services that will help them succeed and withstand any future economic challenges.
- Continue to engage in collaborative business outreach efforts.

## **Healthy and Skilled Workforce**

A healthy and skilled workforce is the most important factor in attracting, retaining and expanding businesses. Improving the skills and increasing the wages of the local workforce also supports the overall economy by increasing spending within Colusa County.

- Continue to expand and strengthen the network that addresses workforce and training by regularly collaborating with schools, workforce development, colleges, and businesses on skills, requirements and training.
- Work with schools, colleges, and employers to implement programs for career exploration, mentoring, and job shadowing.
- Support and strengthen ongoing efforts to demonstrate career pathways to students.

## **Community and Connectivity**

People want to live and work in communities that are safe, attractive, and interesting. This element of a prosperous community includes services and amenities that are critical to quality of life e.g., healthcare, childcare, housing, transportation, broadband, utility infrastructure, arts and recreation.

- Work with local farms, ranches, downtowns, and small businesses to establish and promote a local dining experience fashioned after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Local Foods, Local Places.
- Support population and business growth with new and upgraded infrastructure necessary to realize the planned housing development.
- Move forward on the existing plans for downtown revitalization and improvements that support resident, worker, and visitor experiences e.g., sidewalks, pedestrian amenities, signage, parks, and entertainment venues.

- Develop and implement a branded, countywide wayfinding signage program that serves both pedestrians and vehicles in finding downtowns, restaurants, parking, historic venues, recreational sites, trails, parks, etc.
- Establish public/private partnerships and collaborations with property owners to add amenities that provide residents and visitors with an exceptional experience in Colusa County and encourages extended stays, e.g. shaded seating downtown, landscaping, planters, easily pedestrian walkways, bike lanes, clean and safe restrooms, and free wireless connectivity.

## Implementing Team Members

County of Colusa staff and elected officials

Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)

City of Colusa staff and elected officials

City of Williams staff and elected officials

Colusa County Office of Education

Colusa County Chamber of Commerce

Colusa County One-Stop

North Central Counties Consortium (NCCC)

North Far North Regional Consortium (Community Colleges)

Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

University of California Cooperative Extension

Valley Vision

## Performance Metrics

Economic Base Diversification—increase in the traded sector establishments and employment

Resources—sales tax revenue, funding for economic development and infrastructure improvements

Workforce—educational attainment, graduation rates, CTE certifications

Preservation of Quality of Place—worker affordable housing, downtown improvements

# APPENDIX

- A. Public Engagement: Stakeholders, Survey Participants and Results
- B. Economic Conditions
- C. Zoning Maps showing I-5 industrial site opportunities in Williams, Arbuckle, and Maxwell
- D. Reference Documents
- E. CEDS Committee presentations