



June 2022

ENVISION TAHOE PROSPERITY PLAYBOOK

A SHARED ACTION PLAN FOR ECONOMIC
RESILIENCE, INVESTMENT AND COMMUNITY
INCLUSION

Photo by Brian Walker Photography

What is a Playbook?

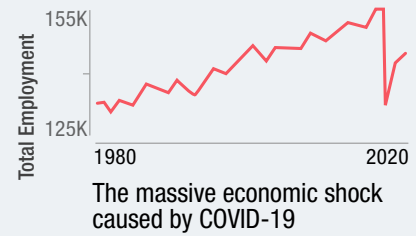
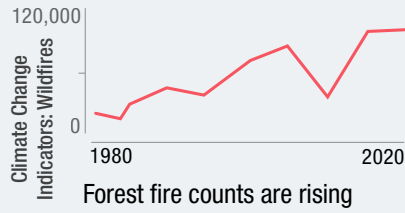
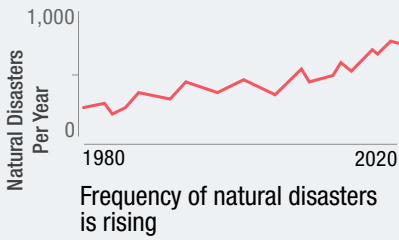
A “playbook” refers to a set of business- or job-building activities or “plays” that can be activated based on best timing, available talent and resources, and the support of a “coalition of the willing.” The playbook approach empowers individuals, groups, and communities to choose the specific activities that match their priorities, but each play ties into a larger vision and purpose. A playbook enables adaptation and flexibility in rapidly changing times yet is built on fundamental principles. It’s the right approach for disruptive times.

Sparked by Disruption

The world is undergoing increasingly rapid and unprecedented changes. Catastrophic events are anticipated to be more frequent, more severe, and less predictable going forward. Our daily experience today is marked by a lingering pandemic, geopolitical uncertainty, hyper partisanship, rising inflation, climate change, rapid changes in technology, and more pronounced cultural divisions. This era of turbulence is predicted to impact global and local economic performance for the next decade.

Wildfires, droughts, pandemics, recessions and their local impacts have been a wake-up call for leaders in the Tahoe Region. To thrive in the coming decade, regions and their residents must develop resilience (the ability to withstand economic, ecological, and social shocks and disruptions) and emerge from disruptions with less damage and more strength than before.

Disruption in Tahoe and the wider world is more frequent and severe.



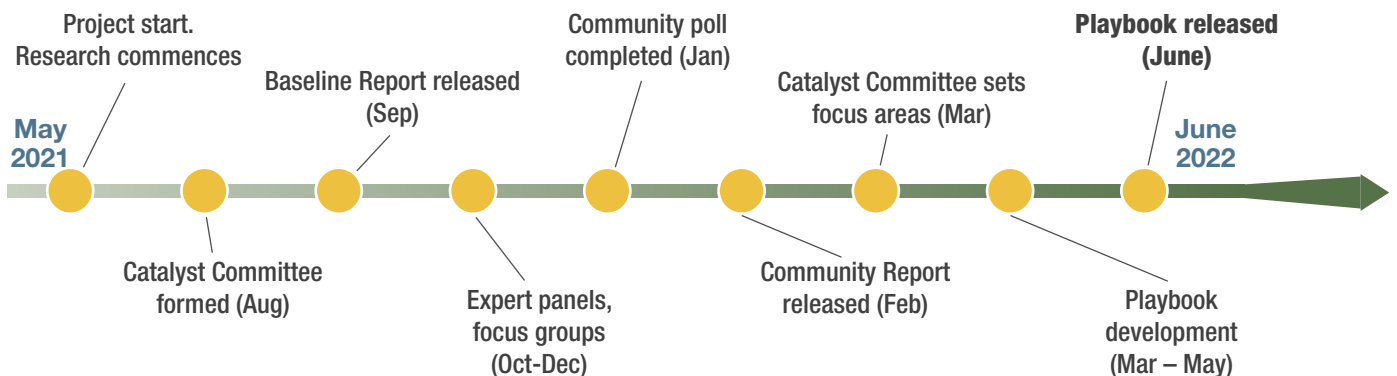
Diversifying the economic base has been discussed in Tahoe for decades. In the wake of COVID-19 and the devastating impacts of the Caldor Fire, the time for action is now. The *Envision Tahoe Prosperity Playbook* shows how.

Envision Tahoe: A Community-Led, Data-Informed Response

Envision Tahoe is a 12-month economic initiative led by the Tahoe Prosperity Center, guided by a diverse and regionally representative steering committee, and underwritten by the U.S. Economic Development Administration as a COVID-19 response to create a collaborative economic recovery and resiliency strategy for the Tahoe Basin emphasizing economic diversification.



A snapshot of many of the local leaders from business, government, education, environmental, nonprofit and community groups who have given their time and expertise to guide the Envision Tahoe work. These leaders renamed their group the “Catalyst Committee” to reflect their ongoing commitment after this initial planning phase of EnvisionTahoe to continue to catalyze conversation and action for a resilient and sustainable economy.





“Discretionary spending fuels tourism-based economies, so these economies are highly susceptible to economic shocks.”

– Beacon Economic Forecasting and Resiliency Analysis for Tahoe, August 2020

Photo by Rachid Dahnoun : Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority

Lake Tahoe is a world-class destination, frequented by 15 million visitors a year. The area’s \$5 billion annual economy is now dominated by tourism, as the Envision Tahoe Baseline Report showed. Tourism is highly seasonal, offers mostly low wage jobs, and is highly susceptible to disruption. Other promising job sectors in Tahoe have remained flat to down the past 10 years, all while a lack of housing and skyrocketing living expenses are forcing workers and families out. Envision Tahoe seeks a different future. Rather than being thought of only as a tourist destination, **the vision of *Envision Tahoe* is for the Tahoe-Truckee Region to be renowned as a great place to live, raise a family, build a business, AND to visit.**

Four Long-Term Goals

1. **Strengthen key industries.** Lead on responsible tourism. Seek to attract and support both young and established firms to diversify the economic base. Emphasize procurement and contracting strategies aimed at local firm development and growth. In addition to tourism, support and grow promising business clusters well suited for Tahoe in the health and wellness and environmental innovation spaces.
2. **Build skill pathways for upward mobility.** Explore ways to build up adaptive, skills-focused (vs. industry-focused) programs in environmental innovation, health and

Prosperity Playbook, by the numbers:

- 36 separate elements
- 4 long-term goals
- 2 foundational strategies
- 3 economic resilience strategies
- 8 indicators to measure Envision Tahoe performance
- 5 indicators to measure regional economic inclusion and diversification
- 11 indicators to rate the region’s quality of life
- \$677,500 in identified local community program investments
- \$40 million in identified regional infrastructure investments

wellness, and outdoor recreation jobs. Build out a region-wide skills pathway system and program that aligns employers, workforce agencies, area colleges, and K-12 schools (public and private) on a shared vision linked to the diversification strategy outlined here.

3. **Jump start the innovation ecosystem.** Build on the growing base of talent in Tahoe by regularly bringing together entrepreneurs and the support community. Focus in year-one on mapping the ecosystem and identifying barriers and opportunities. Match start-ups to the right technical assistance and funding.
4. **Shape the enabling environment.** The enabling environment includes everything that makes efforts like Envision Tahoe possible, from existing government rules and policies, to formal and informal public private partnerships, funding and incentive programs, and the support of the community. In a region split by two states, five counties, with 18 distinct communities and a regional government overlay, creating institutional alignment and widespread agreement on a course of action is key to ultimate success.

Workforce Housing and Transportation are Economic Foundations



As the saying goes, “**jobs need a place to sleep at night,**” and in Tahoe this is increasingly difficult. Firefighters, teachers, hotel and restaurant staff, among other professionals, are increasingly forced to live outside the region and commute in. The 2020 U.S. Census shows only a 1% increase in the number of housing units over the past 10 years. Inflation and other pressures have forced the average median home price in Tahoe to approach \$1 million. The *Prosperity Playbook* outlines a set of policy changes within local control that would boost different housing types while maintaining environmental and neighborhood protections.



Photo by Kimera Collective

Moving people and goods efficiently is key to economic vitality. Like many mountain economies, Tahoe residents and businesses have been impacted by the fact that its transportation systems have largely been built for rural capacity, and struggle under urban-level demand. The *Prosperity Playbook* calls for stepped-up mobility investments to reduce traffic congestion, lessen environmental impacts, and increase mobility options such as the highly successful micro transit initiatives underway in the Basin.

Three Areas To Improve Economic Resilience



Photo by Ben Fish at TAMBA

Advancing Responsible Tourism: Tahoe is a community built for 60,000 whose population quadruples on weekends, packing roads and neighborhoods and causing harm to trails, beaches, and other fragile places. Envision Tahoe strongly supports joint efforts led by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency that creates equitable access to outdoor recreation while encouraging the “stewardship of place” by visitors and residents alike.



Photo by Brian Walker Photography

Strengthening Entrepreneurship and Innovation (“Tahoe, Inc.”)

Start-ups and small businesses provide the majority of job creation and employment in regions, so focusing on emerging and small business vitality is critical to growing wages, boosting generational wealth, providing a range of career advancement opportunities, and diversifying the local tax base. The *Prosperity Playbook* includes 10 different “plays” that can be undertaken that would create a tighter and more cohesive entrepreneurship community in the Tahoe-Truckee region and improve overall business density, fluidity, connectivity and diversity. A committed group of entrepreneurs and support organizations in Nevada and California are gearing up for action later this year.



Photo by Visit Truckee Tahoe

Increasing Support for Mainstreet Businesses and Anchor Employers

Mainstreet businesses and anchor employers like hospitals and universities are the lifeblood of any mountain economy, offering family-sustaining jobs. A proposed ***Business Retention and Sustainability program*** would serve as an early warning system so local businesses get the timely help they need to survive and thrive. A connected **Anchor Employer strategy** would focus on relieving “pain points” as well as leverage large employers’ purchasing, workforce, finance, real estate, and community development powers for community wealth building.

Envision Tahoe Investment Plan

Envision Tahoe Local Community Programmatic Support	Description	Investment Ask
Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Regional Promotion Program	Halftime employee and/or consultant to provide backbone services for entrepreneurship initiatives.	\$ 75,000 annually
	Ecosystem map software application and live data display to facilitate local and regional business transactions, venture capital matching, and deal flow.	\$20,000 in year-one and \$5,000 for ongoing vendor costs after the first 12 months
	Design and execution of a one-year branding and marketing campaign to build positive impressions about the sustainable business environment in Tahoe-Truckee.	\$200,000 (one time) for creative services, asset development, and campaign costs
	Technical assistance (legal, financial, and operational) to launch a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) ¹ and set its activities in motion for the initial 12 months until it becomes self-sustaining.	\$50,000 (one time)
Business Retention and Sustainability Program	Part-time BRS Coordinator position to provide management services and volunteer coordination assistance.	\$75,000 annually
	Software for BRS program data storing, cross referencing, and analysis.	\$7,500
	BRS data interpretation and analysis and action planning.	In-kind
Responsible Tourism Program	Leverage the Destination Stewardship Partnership to develop a shared vision for a more sustainable recreation and tourism future and provide an environment for improved collaboration among public and private partners.	Borne by TRPA and current funding partners
Workforce Housing Program	Programmatic costs related to administering a housing trust fund in the Basin.	\$250,000 annually
Total FIRST Year Investment (Program expenses)		\$677,500
Financing Regional Improvements for Economic Inclusion and Diversification	Description	Investment Ask
Workforce Housing Investments	Capital Campaign target for first 24 months of the CDFI's existence.	\$10 million for activities and programs that make housing units more affordable
Start-up and Small Business Investments	Capital Campaign target for first 24 months of the CDFI's existence.	\$10 million for business start-ups
Mobility Investments	\$20M is the annual gap identified to get the minimum investment level for priority transportation projects over the next 25 years. The total investment needed is more than \$1 billion over 25 years.	Not less than \$20 million annually
Regional Financing Investment:		\$40 million

¹ CDFI's play an important role in generating economic activity and opportunity in under-capitalized communities by offering affordable credit and financing vehicles. Established under federal law in 1994, these institutions help families finance their first home, support residents starting or growing business, or provide needed capital. The goals of increased workforce housing, stepped-up entrepreneurship and small business activity contained the Prosperity Playbook could be enabled by a Tahoe-Truckee-based CDFI working collaboratively with local partners.



WE BELIEVE THAT:

- **The health of the environment and the health of the economy are interdependent with** the health of the community. Each must be planned for and considered jointly.
- **Lake Tahoe should double-down on its leadership position in sustainable development** practices, serving as a test bed in the transition to an innovative, low carbon future.
- **Economic inclusion is vital for both the economy and society.** It is essential for prosperity, upward mobility, individual agency, and improved business and economic results.
- **Interventions must be considered as an integrated whole, rather than independent domains.** Activities and decisions in one domain necessarily impact the rest of the system. Piece-meal solutions don't create durable change.
- **Viewed as a system, concerted actions will lead to multi-benefit solutions.** For example, increasing access to workforce housing will improve the local labor market for hiring, increase employee retention, shrink long commutes and the traffic congestion it can cause, improve public safety, and reduce the health and environmental impacts of commuter traffic, among other benefits.
- **Collective action will deliver better results.** The Tahoe-Truckee Region is split across two states and a multitude of government jurisdictions and its town centers are geographically remote. Region-wide planning and investment is essential in order to identify and make critical shifts in major systems like housing, transportation, and broadband, but changes are best championed by local organizations possessing the talent and capabilities to deliver them. “Plan and partner regionally, but execute locally” is our mantra.

Performance Measures for Accountability

While each specific action area within *Envision Tahoe* includes suggested performance measures, the following macro-level indicators would help public, private, environmental and community sector leaders evaluate progress towards a more resilient, inclusive, and diversified economy.

Tahoe-Truckee Region Economic Performance

- Per capita income
- Average wage growth
- Income distribution by location and demographic make-up
- Growth in economic output in Envision Tahoe growth sectors (e.g., health and wellness, environmental innovation, and sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation segments)
- Working age population levels located in-region

Tahoe-Truckee Quality of Life Performance

- Income levels above cost of living (e.g., living wage comparison)
- Affordable rent index
- Percent of households that own their home
- Number of regional housing units that a median income resident can afford
- K-12 public and private school enrollment levels
- Local college / university enrollment levels
- Educational attainment level
- Average commute times / vehicle miles traveled
- Air quality (ozone and particulate matter)
- Number of households that meet minimum federal broadband speeds (25 megabits per second downloading and 3 megabits per second uploading)
- Social progress index score (www.socialprogress.org)

Why Inclusive Growth Matters

Inclusive economic growth is good for both people and place. Research shows that regions with less inequality grow more sustainably over time. They optimize assets, are more efficient and productive, and reduce the business and societal cost of poverty. To learn more, check out the pioneering research done by USC Professor Manuel Pastor and UC Davis / UC Santa Cruz Professor Chris Benner at www.justgrowth.org



Photo by Brian Walker Photography

How to Use the Playbook in the Months and Years to Come

There are no bystanders when it comes to the health and vitality of our local economy and the places we live and play. We all play a crucial role. The *Prosperity Playbook* provides a planning tool for local residents and governments (local, state, federal, and tribal), as well as business, environmental, and community-based groups to choose the activities that match their near- and long-term goals and priorities. This tool should not be seen as prescriptive in nature; rather, it is meant to be seen as a “living” document that embraces flexibility as consensus is formed around these activities.

Early priorities for *Envision Tahoe* stakeholders include:

- **Housing:** Focus on policy changes, incentives, and securing financing
- **Transit:** Facilitate regional support for investments in multi-modal mobility to reduce traffic congestion, lessen environmental impacts, and increase transit options
- **Recreation and Tourism:** Establish a shared vision and destination stewardship plan that will better manage outdoor recreation and visitation with public and private sector organization buy-in
- **Entrepreneurship:** Tahoe Inc., the new entrepreneur-led workgroup, will focus on reducing obstacles, and increasing investments to start-ups and main street businesses
- **Local Workforce and Businesses:** A system is built that supports local businesses by connecting them to the talent, training, and resources they need to thrive
- **Envision Tahoe Project Support:** The Catalyst Committee confirms immediate, mid-range, and long-term priorities and commits to continued oversight and guidance
- **Accountability:** The Tahoe Prosperity Center will report out on the region’s progress using *Envision Tahoe’s* performance measures



TAHOE PROSPERITY CENTER

Envision Tahoe is an initiative of the **Tahoe Prosperity Center** which serves as the community and economic development agency coordinating regional action across the Basin. To learn more, visit www.tahoeprosperty.org

Envision Tahoe underwriters include the **U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)** with matching support provided by ADVANCE, the City of South Lake Tahoe, California; Douglas County, Nevada; Placer County, California, and the Tahoe Prosperity Center. Initial seed funding for *Envision Tahoe* was graciously provided by all three of Tahoe’s community foundations: Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation, and El Dorado Community Foundation.