

Better City helps draft a resilience plan

by Emma Gadeski
Herald Reporter

Economic development consulting firm Better City met with local stakeholders to gather feedback on a draft of its Resilience Action Plan last week. The plan gives recommendations for combating risks that are relevant to Lake County.

These risks can be any sort of disruptive event, like the closure of the Climax Mine and resulting loss of property tax revenue. They could also include wildfires or other changes to the economy and workforce.

In response to these concerns, Climax Molybdenum

Company hired Better City to develop an action plan and selected the Leadville Lake County Economic Development Corporation (LLCEDC) as the project's community sponsor. The goal is to develop a list of actions and projects that could be eligible for federal and state grants.

LLCEDC gathered a group of representatives from local government, nonprofits and other organizations to share feedback on the plan during the July 15 discussion led by Better City CEO Jason Godfrey.

"Who is impacted by loss of property taxes?" Godfrey

asked the group, prompting a serious discussion on planning ahead for the inevitable. Participants agreed that everyone in a community is impacted by loss of property tax revenue.

When mining is no longer a viable industry here, Leadville will need to focus on its other money-making assets. Godfrey recommended coming up with a development vision plan, a clear idea of Leadville's identity.

Having a clear vision of what Leadville is can help the city decide whether upcoming development proposals are appropriate for the area, said Godfrey. For example, most

people in Lake County probably don't think a Walmart belongs here as it doesn't fit with the vision they have.

But a hotel next to the Tabor Opera House, recommended in the plan, seemed to be a more popular idea that

might fit well in town. Tabor Opera House Preservation Foundation Executive Director Sarah Dae said such a project could help build up

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Leadville WEATHER



High



Low



Precipitation

Monday, July 18	76	46	Trace of rain
Tuesday, July 19	78	42	Trace of rain
Wednesday, July 20	76	42	
Thursday, July 21	77	36	Trace of rain
Friday, July 22	76	43	.01 in. of rain
Saturday, July 23	76	42	.03 in. of rain
Sunday, July 24	70	43	.96 in. of rain

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Plan is likely to take many years

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other assets the county has besides mining as that industry dies out.

Other suggestions to combat negative consequences of a shifting industry were prioritizing workforce housing and facilitating commercial property development.

Despite development progress and open job positions in the area, there are still community members who commute out of the county, raising concern for local government officials who want to recruit employees.

In the future, Better City plans to use more targeted surveys to reach the commuter population meaningfully and hear their reasons for not working in the county rather than just looking at data that's already been collected.

Based on last week's and continued community feedback, Better City hopes to finalize its recommendations within a month.

The final draft will include

a list of actions different nonprofits and other community groups can take in response to prioritized risks. If the organizations participate and implement these action items, they could receive Freeport-McMoRan (Climax's parent company), state and federal grants to help them.

The plan's recommendations are just conceptual ideas right now, said Godfrey, adding that consultants will continue seeking public input to figure out what's best for the community.

Complete implementation could take 10 to 20 years, but the pieces are in place to get started. "It's not a 'right now' plan," said Nancy Bailey, LLCEDC interim director. "I want everyone to keep an open mind when it comes to the timing."

Godfrey further emphasized that while implementation will take years, the firm is working to create actionable steps to follow so the plan can eventually become a reality.



COMMUNITY UPDATES

Across the U.S., employers are focused on attracting new employees. Sometimes the competition for new employees causes employers to overlook how vital employee retention is and to ignore the negative impact scrambling for new employees can have on loyal workers, especially those with many years of experience.

An employee retention strategy not only reduces pressure on recruitment in the near term, but can also be an essential strategy for boosting long-term growth and business value.

One convenience store chain with thousands of hourly employees had an annual turnover rate in 2019 of 160 percent. After estimating the cost of replacing a worker at \$1,500 and adding up additional costs like overtime pay to cover vacant shifts, the company launched an aggressive employee retention campaign.

Not only did the retention effort reduce the need for recruitment, but it also reduced quits among experienced employees caused by additional workloads and unpredictable schedules. The aggressive retention program cut turnover by nearly 50 percent, boosting the company's bottom line and allowing management to focus more on attracting and retaining customers.

- Say thank you... (a lot): Employers are often too quick to make money the sole focus of employee satisfaction when a heartfelt thank you delivered with genuine appreciation is what nurtures us and feeds our need for recognition.
 - Do small things showing appreciation and do them often: How about a run to get ice cream for everyone or tickets to see a movie with popcorn and soda? A predictable gift is appreciated because it's a holiday or at the end of the year, but a small gesture will often have an outsized impact. Don't we all like pleasant surprises?
 - Create a culture of pride: When people work in a business and are proud of it, they tell family, friends and strangers about what they do. As the saying goes, "You can be a bricklayer or a builder of cathedrals," and the difference is the pride one has for their work.
 - Focus on employee growth and development: If you offer a sought-after career that can last for all of a person's working life, then good for you. But many jobs aren't forever; they're steps along life's journey. If you nurture people, encourage personal and professional growth, and celebrate the people you work with even when they leave for a new job, you'll be an employer who attracts the best, the brightest and those most eager to learn.
 - Money and perks: Employees can't stay in a job if they fall further behind every month. They'll go elsewhere because they have to, whether they want to or not. Pay all you reasonably can while not endangering the business. Find ways to offer outsized benefits, like options for health insurance through an industry association or a local association group plan. Inexpensive life and disability insurance can also be great perks.
 - Build your talent pipeline: Encourage high school students to visit your workplace or even intern with you for a whole work-based learning experience. Use increased diversity as an asset, inviting and welcoming non-traditional workers. Reach out to community colleges and four-year colleges to connect with students eager for a job, and, who knows, maybe even a career with you!
 - Think of employees as volunteers: You can pay people to arrive at work, do their job and stay until their shift ends. But the people who launch into every customer interaction with excellence as their goal don't do it for the money — that's something they volunteer from the heart. Look at them as volunteers and celebrate their contributions.
- For help developing an effective employee retention strategy, contact Sue Miller, rural resort sub area employment specialist with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, at sue.miller@state.co.us.