



Recharge Chester & The Almanor Basin

Recharge Our Community's Economy (ROCE) Workshop Series



Facilitated by: Dan Dever (RCAC), V Al-ag (RCAC), Carissa Patrone Maikuri (Economic Recovery Corps | RCAC), Zachary Gately (Plumas County), and Tracey Ferguson (Plumas County)

Co-facilitated by Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) and Plumas County with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Rural Capacity Building Grant program.

Introduction

Plumas County and Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) have partnered to work alongside the Chester-Almanor Basin recruitment committee, community members, and business owners to establish strategies that leverage regional assets to create new economic opportunities and support small business while building wealth in the Lake Almanor Basin. Recharge Our Community's Economy (ROCE) is an interactive, hands-on workshop series designed to identify opportunities for local and regional economic development and address existing challenges. The workshop series is held on September 3, October 1, October 29, and November 19, 2025 from 8:00am-2:00pm at the Almanor Recreation Center.

During the workshops, participants:

- Evaluate local assets and community wealth
- Discover new economic opportunities
- Identify community leaders/entrepreneurs to turn opportunities into growth
- Create action plans to transform ideas into solutions

The co-facilitation of this ROCE workshop series by RCAC and Plumas County was made possible with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Rural Capacity Building Grant program. The series is also supported by The Almanor Foundation, Seneca Healthcare District, and Lake Almanor Area Chamber of Commerce.



ROCE WORKSHOP #1

September 3, 2025

The purpose of the ROCE session one was to create a trusting and open environment, define the community, learn about new community economic development models, identify assets and wealth within Chester and the Almanor Basin, and create a history timeline for the area. There were 12 participants representing business, nonprofit, philanthropy, and community leadership in attendance.



Community Roles

The session began with introductions and defining community roles to understand how everyone has a role in creating change in their community. Of the eight community roles self-identified, Storyteller and Superhero were the most prevalent throughout the workshop attendees. Roles included Community Champion, Resource Mapper (2), Storyteller (4), Gate Opener, Action Driver, Superhero (3) but the group was missing a Rainmaker and Mad Scientist. Some participants were present to gather information and make things happen, because they believe in the potential of the Lake Almanor Basin, want to mobilize the younger generation to be involved, spark change, promote the area, or have history to share.



COMMUNITY CHAMPION

A relationship-building visionary who identifies the community rallying flag and unifies everyone around it



RESOURCE MAPPER

A network builder and organizer who researches, gathers, and maintains connections to community resources



STORYTELLER

A natural promoter who finds, shares, or creates stories that establish and celebrate the rallying narrative for the community



GATE OPENER

A connector and bridge builder who holds open entry points for all, connecting marginalized groups into the wider community



MAD SCIENTIST

A confident catalyst who is willing to lead implementation of experiments that are not yet proven but have significant potential for positive community impact



ACTION DRIVER

A results-focused instigator who keeps momentum building, spurring community leaders from inspiration to action to accomplishment



RAINMAKER

A trusted community leader who has earned the respect, credibility, and clout to influence potential funders or political leaders



SUPERHERO (BONUS!)

A successful entrepreneur or widely recognized icon who inspires locals to pursue big dreams and can engage their unique network to support the community

ROCE Session #1 Participants:

1. Anne Kassebaum, Rossannek@gmail.com
2. Brack Green, brack46@icloud.com
3. Brandi Camarena, Seneca Hospital, bcamarena@senecahospital.org
4. Chelsea Harrison, Lake Almanor Chamber of Commerce, info@lakealmanorarea.com
5. Chelssa Outland, Seneca Hospital, coutland@senecahospital.org
6. Janelle Orr, The Almanor Foundation, jorr@almanorfoundation.org
7. Josh Huddleston, The Almanor Foundation, jwhudd4@gmail.com
8. Lynn Rafferty, The Elegant Farmer, lynn@thelegantfarmer.com
9. Mark Lilley, Mountain Ventures LLC, mark@mountainventuresllc.com
10. Mary Lilley, Mountain Ventures LLC, mary@mountainventuresllc.com

11. Susan Bryner, The Almanor Foundation, susan.bryner@gmail.com

12. Tom McGowan, Plumas County Board of Supervisors, tom.m.mcgowan@gmail.com

ROCE Session #1 Facilitators:

1. Dan Dever, RCAC, dan.dever@rcac.org
2. V Al-ag, RCAC, vernalou.al-ag@rcac.org
3. Carissa Patronne Maikuri, Economic Recovery Corps | RCAC, carissa.patronemaikuri@rcac.org
4. Zachary Gately, Plumas County, zacharygately@countyofplumas.com
5. Tracey Ferguson, Plumas County, traceyferguson@countyofplumas.com

RCAC-Plumas County Collaboration



Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1978 headquartered in West Sacramento, CA that serves the 13 western states. The RCAC mission is to *partner with underserved rural and Indigenous communities to achieve their vision and well-being through technical assistance, training, financial resources and advocacy*. RCAC has programs in Environment (water/wastewater infrastructure), Housing, Community Economic Development (Building Rural Economies- BRE), and Community Facilities and is also a CDFI.

Since 2024, RCAC has been collaborating with Plumas County. As a part of the collaborative work, RCAC is providing facilitation and technical assistance in both Chester-Almanor Basin (through ROCE workshops and beyond) and in Quincy

to carry forward the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities (RERC) Action Plan approved by the Board of Supervisors in November 2022. Representatives from RCAC and Plumas County have been coordinating five RERC Goal Groups to advance (1) recreation, (2) tribal collaboration, (3) downtown Quincy revitalization and connectivity, (4) business and economic development, and (5) workforce housing and lodging.

Creating a Trusting & Open Environment

Facilitators highlighted the importance of creating a trusting and open environment for discussion, creativity, and innovation throughout the ROCE process and beyond. Community agreements were established (see below).

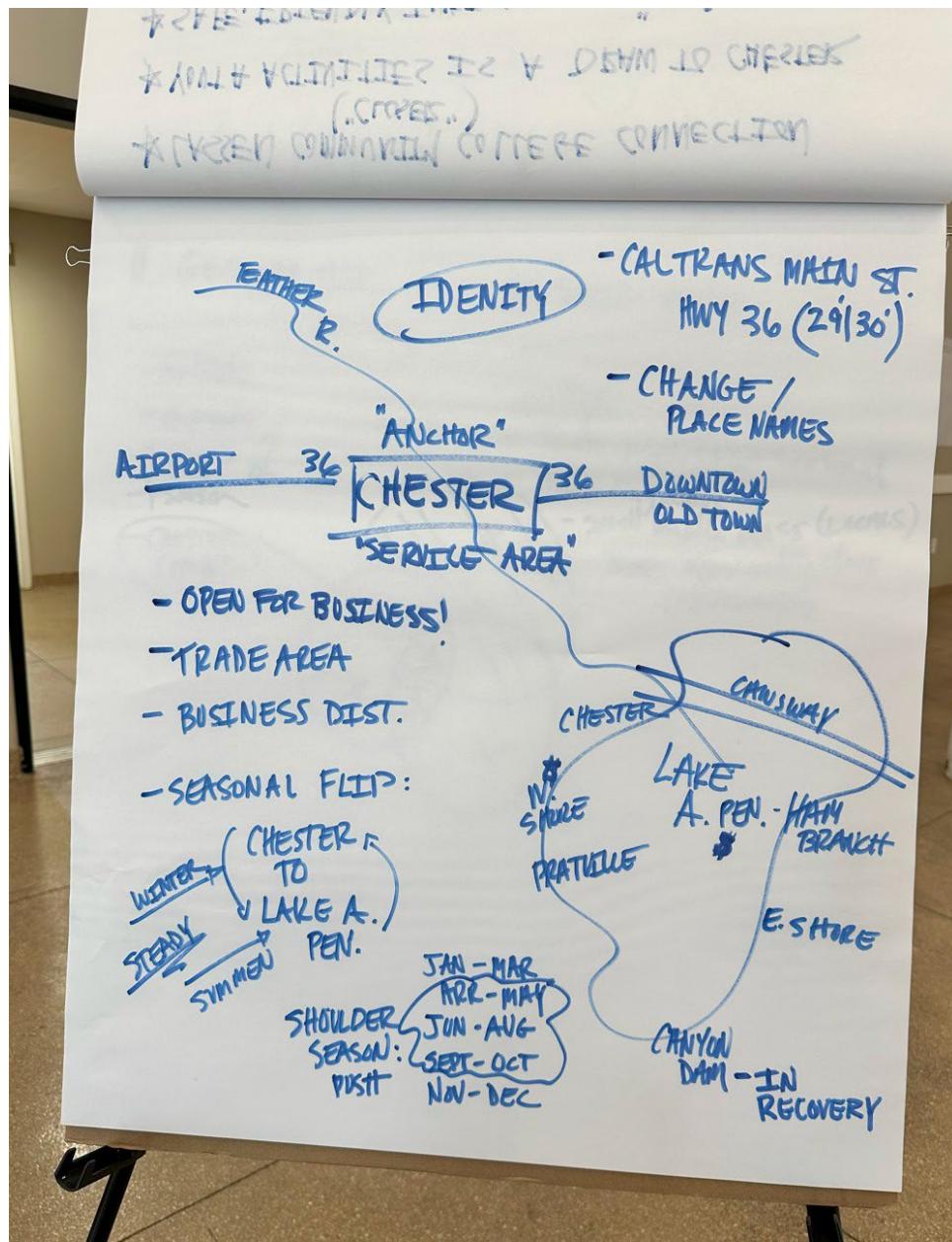
Creating a Trusting and Open Environment

- Be open to this experience and each other
- Be authentic - speak your truth without blame or judgement
- Listen attentively and minimize distractions
- Take space and make space
- Respect other's thoughts even if they differ from your own
- Notice moments of discomfort and stay curious
- Assume positive intent
- Be open to all communication styles
- Be "All In" - you get out what you put into this process



Defining the Community: Chester & the Lake Almanor Basin

It is important to understand what we all mean by "community". In defining the community, most agreed that this work encompassed the entire Lake Almanor Basin with Chester being the anchor and economic (service) center to the basin. The Lake Almanor Basin includes a radius of around 45 minutes driving and is a diverse community that is changing in demographics. The boundaries of the community can depend on who you are asking- those who live here, those who visit here (could be seasonal), and those from surrounding communities.



Some participants noted that there are more than retirees in the area (in comparison to the past) with some families owning a second, third or fourth home there, which can make the community feel transient. Chester & the Lake Almanor Basin is a seasonal community with snowbirds and tourists and families that spend their summers there. There are many opportunities for recreation and family friendly activities, especially for those coming into town from surrounding larger cities. There are many family-owned businesses in the area. Businesses are generating less revenue this year than what they typically would during the summer months, with many feeling that the Lake road construction is a major contributing factor to the decline.

Those who registered for the ROCE workshop series online answered in one word how they would describe their community. While opinions differed online and in person during the first workshop, responses can be found below. Some participants mentioned that an upcoming main street transportation project and “road diet” can help to redefine the community identity and “quaintness” of the place.



Opportunity
developed Blue-Collar
Friendly
Peaceful Quaint Hallmark
Struggling Changing

Potential
Beautiful
Rural Hometown

The consensus was that the community is **made up of locals** even though it is felt that there are not enough of them to support a thriving community (which has been the case for some time). Participants also agreed that there is a very small middle class of people who can afford to live in the Chester-Lake Almanor Basin area.

Community History Timeline

During the workshop, participants worked in small groups to recall and map critical economic events across four time periods: Pre-1900s, 1900–1950, 1950–2000, and 2000–Present. Working in groups allowed participants to share stories and exchange different perspectives on how history shaped Chester and the Lake Almanor Basin. They identified key infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, airports, bridges, and local industries including lumber, mining, and tourism. Participants also highlighted environmental events, particularly wildfires, that have repeatedly affected the community, shaping both economic activity and daily life.

During the debrief, participants highlighted how events like the establishment of the country club influenced early economic growth, while more recent factors such as climate change, wildfires, and changes to school schedules have directly impacted the tourism industry. They discussed the community’s need to adapt tourism offerings from a winter- and snow-based focus to more year-round or alternative experiences, reflecting on how the community needs to continually adjust to environmental, social, and economic changes to sustain local vitality.

**Chester, California
Community History Timeline**

Pre-1900s

- Pre-1800s: Mountain Maidu inhabited the area
- 1854: Plumas County established
- 1857: Dr. William Pratt established Prattville Hotel
- ~1860-1880: Olsen Barn built by Peter Olsen
- 1894: Chester post office opened



Hotel Olsen pre-1900's

1900-1950

- 1909: Prattville fire
- 1914: Lake Almanor formed
- 1920s: Red River Lumber in Westwood
- 1930s: Seneca Reach gold mine active
- 1940: Chester Airport established
- 1943: Collins Pine sawmill operational
- 1944: Fruit Growers Supply Company acquired Red River mill
- 1920-1969: Chester Rodeo held
- 1930: Bridge constructed



Collin Pines Company 1945

1950-2000

- 1950: Country Club / LACC established
- 1950: High School built
- 1954: Hospital built
- 1970: Diversion dam built
- 1970s: Westshore developed
- 1970s: PGE raised Lake Almanor to 4500 ft elevation
- 1970s: Highlands Ranch Resort developed
- 1977: LACC golf course established
- 1980: Plumas Bank opened
- 1990: Owl affects lumber industry
- 1990: Bailey Creek developed
- 1993: National Park closed down ski hill
- 1993: NAFTA timber tax changes affect counties
- 1995: Chester High School wins state championship



Street scene 1966

2000-present

- 2000: California landlord laws impact long-term rentals
- Early 2000s: Stover Mountain closed
- Early 2000s: Dyer Mountain project did not happen
- 2000s: Climate change impacts noted
- 2000s: Dog sled races ended
- 2000s: Online travel agencies reduce local short-term rental revenue
- Mid 2000s: Minimum wage increases impact businesses
- Mid 2000s: School schedule changes impact tourism
- 2007-2008: Housing market economy changes
- 2008: Economy greatly impacted; housing bust
- 2009: Almanor Railroad stopped running
- 2015: Parks & Recreation improvements
- 2019: Record low school enrollment (average dropped from 35 to 17)
- 2020: Covid pandemic; remote workers move to area
- 2021: Dixie Fire
- 2024: Park Fire impacts area



present day Chester



RCAC
www.rcac.org

Learn more at
<https://www.visitmineralcounty.com/>



Community Visioning: Future Timeline & Future Headlines



Building on the historical reflection, participants developed a future timeline, envisioning potential developments, infrastructure, and community growth. This exercise helped connect lessons from the past with aspirations for the future.

Finally, participants moved into “Future Headlines,” drafting newspaper-style headlines to illustrate their envisioned successes and priorities for the Lake Almanor Basin. One group even created a mock newspaper, the *Lake Almanor Basin Gazette*, bringing their vision to life in a tangible, creative format. The purpose of these activities was to encourage collaborative thinking, highlight community priorities, and translate ideas into concrete, shared goals, fostering a sense of ownership and excitement for the region’s future.

Chester, California Community Visioning Timeline

Housing & Community Development

- Workforce housing
- Chester housing in town
- Foxwood development: commercial, residential, diverse socioeconomic
- Community incorporation / city status
- Blight enforcement and redevelopment
- Area becomes magnet for young families seeking close community

Education & Workforce

- Huge vocational opportunities (keep youth local, attract others)
- Model for rural schools

Tourism & Recreation

- World-class golf tournament, Pro-Am (Bailey Creek)
- Reopen Stover Mountain, sufficient snow
- Ski economy, snowmobiling
- Fishing tournaments / recreational tourism
- Sierra Buttes trail connection project
- Rec trail around the lake
- Year-round activities for adults & youth 65+
- Family fun center

Infrastructure & Services

- New hospital
- Airport expansion
- Secure internet / fiber optics
- Road upgrades + fiber optics
- Hwy 36 complete street improvements
- Updated park
- Professional service district
- FEMA certification of diversion ditch (Feather River management)
- Infrastructure improvements to adapt to climate-induced winter changes

Economic & Commercial Development

- Pratville commerce on water/docks
- Main Street beautification
- Entertainment district
- Main Street Project 2030
- Merchants' Night (monthly)
- Growth in jobs, services, and family-friendly activities
- Relevant offerings to attract residents and visitors

Future Vision & Community Assets

- Lakefront development @ Walker Ranch
- Sport facility (indoor)
- Year-round recreation and tourism
- Adapting tourism and economy to changing climate conditions



Learn more at
<https://www.visitmineralcounty.com/>



Future Headlines:

Almanor Basin Hits Record High in new Full-Time Families Moving in!

Lake Almanor Basin becomes World-Class Four-Season Travel Destination! Come Visit Soon!



WealthWorks Introduction & Mapping the 8 Forms of Wealth

WealthWorks is a systems approach and holistic asset-based model to do community economic development. It recognizes that community and the economy are interrelated and interdependent. WealthWorks is also a national network that provides rural communities with an alternative to "attraction based economic development. There are various tools, instructions, and success stories on their website: <https://www.wealthworks.org/>.

Overall, WealthWorks focuses on community assets, not deficiencies which maximizes local wealth retention and creation and leads to new small business development. The principles of Wealthworks are to:

1. **Create wealth**, broadly defined, and aspire to do no harm
2. Root wealth in local people, places and firms through **local ownership, control, and influence**
3. **Build lasting livelihoods** by intentionally including people and firms on the economic margins

Wealth encompasses all assets and/or resources that contribute to the well-being of people, places, and economies. WealthWorks categorizes assets into eight forms of wealth including individual, intellectual, social, cultural, financial, natural, built, and political. The eight forms of wealth can be seen below.

The capital	The definition
	Individual The existing stock of skills, understanding, physical health and mental wellness in a region's people.
	Intellectual The existing stock of knowledge, resourcefulness, creativity and innovation in a region's people, institutions, organizations and sectors.
	Social The existing stock of trust, relationships and networks in a region's population.
	Cultural The existing stock of traditions, customs, ways of doing, and world views in a region's population.
	Natural The existing stock of natural resources—for example, water, land, air, plants and animals—in a region's places.
	Built The existing stock of constructed infrastructure—for example, buildings, sewer systems, broadband, roads—in a region's places.
	Political The existing stock of goodwill, influence and power that people, organizations and institutions in the region can exercise in decision-making.
	Financial The existing stock of monetary resources available in the region for investment in the region.

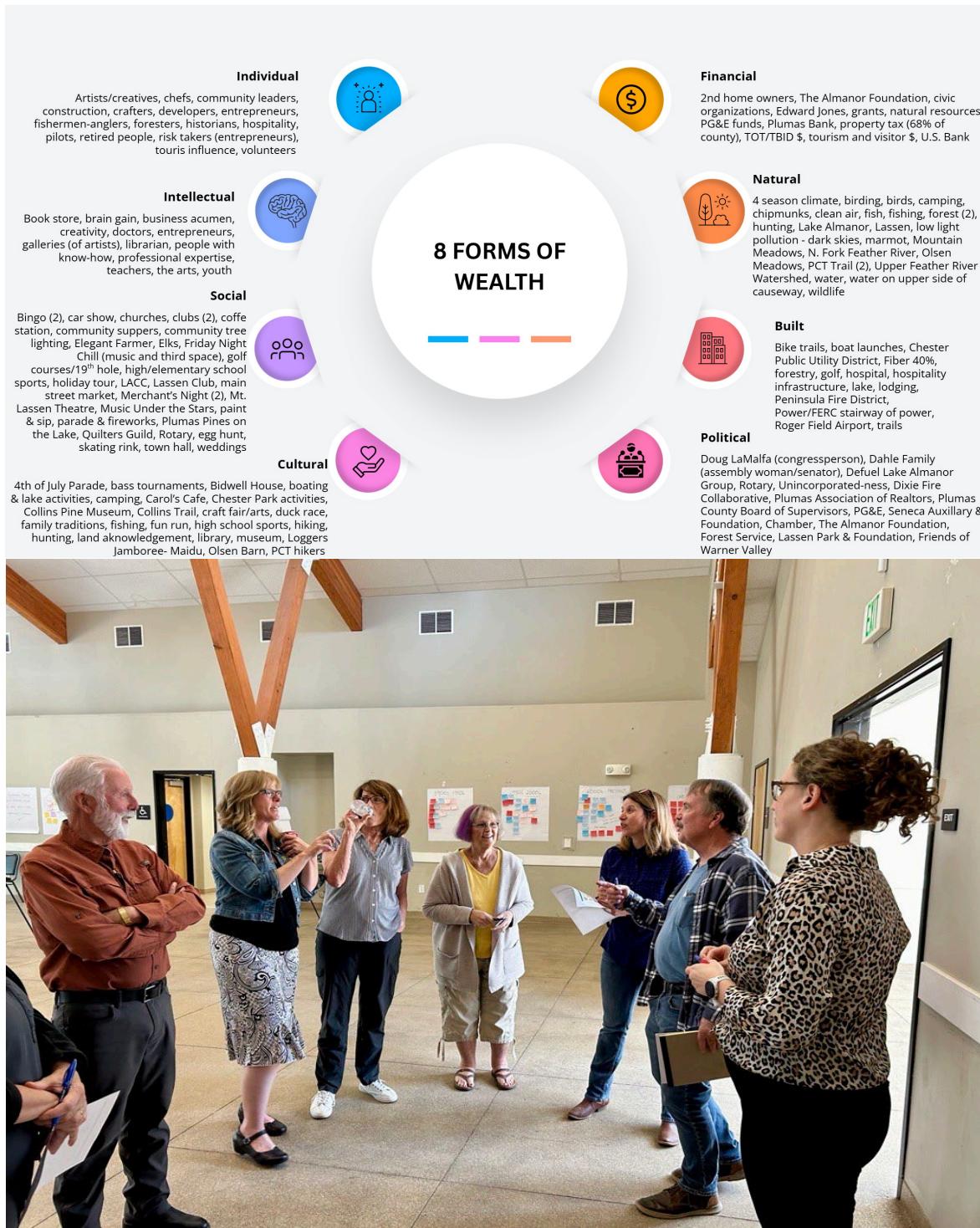
After watching a short video about WealthWorks, participants discussed what they had heard in the video that is pertinent to our work together in Chester-Lake Almanor Basin. Some of the comments included:

- Creating wealth without destroying it
- Importance of mapping out resources to cross-reference and create a road map
- Community attitudes/sentiments are important and there is a culture of helping your neighbor here in the area- “no one is coming to save us”
- A ground-up approach is the only one that will be sustainable
- Celebrating each other’s wins- it is important to uplift each other
- We have the choice to spend local- you can “vote with your dollar”
- Including everyone and retired folks in particular who have a lot of knowledge to share

Community members then went around the room in groups, brainstorming assets for each form of wealth present in the community.



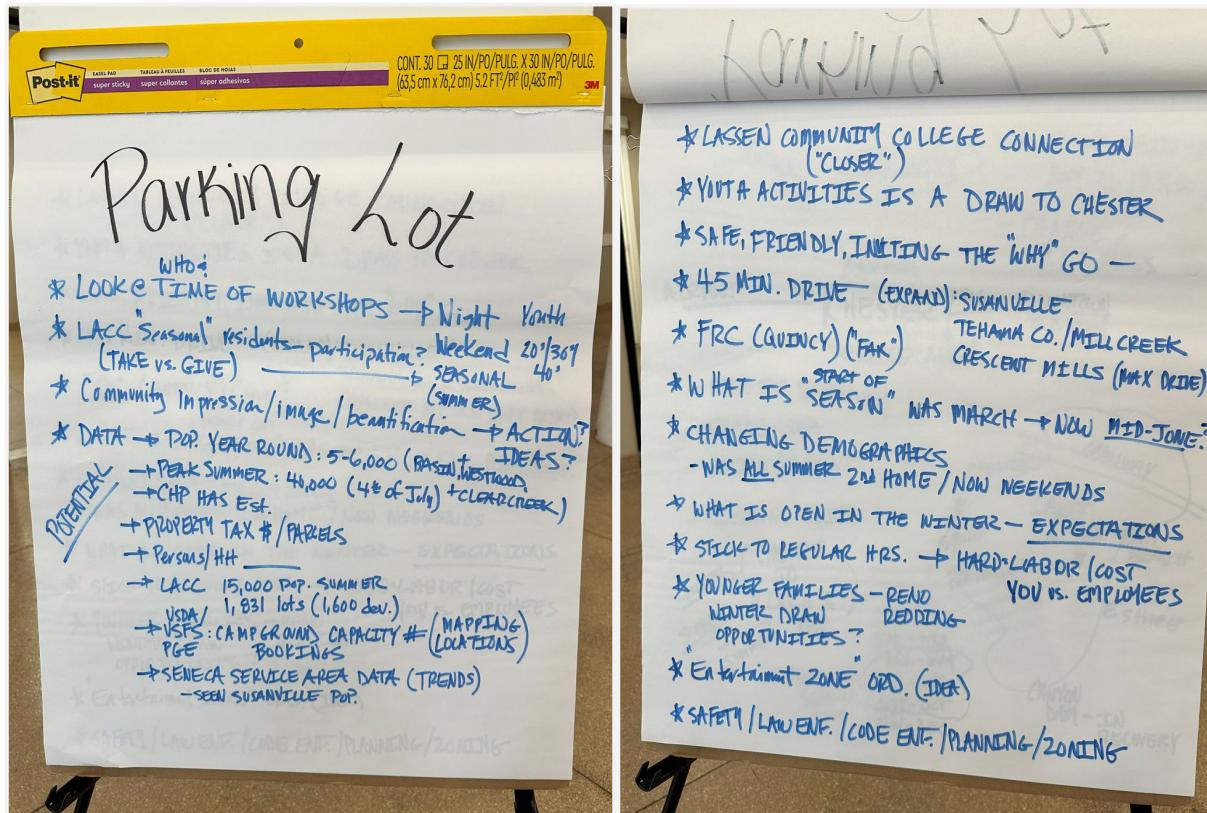
All of the assets identified for the eight forms of wealth can be seen below. In ROCE Workshop #2, we will continue to build from these eight forms of wealth.



During a reflection on the activity, we discussed if and how participants' perspective of community wealth had changed and who else would be important to include in this discussion. While many community members were not surprised about the assets that they have in their community because they are very involved, they recognized that they could have come up with even more assets if there were more participants in the room. In a follow-up discussion around who is missing, the list below was developed for outreach:

- Collins Pine school board
- LACC Board
- Lassen National Forest
- Fishing Association
- Maidu Summit Consortium
- Airport manager
- Chester PUD
- Pen Fire
- Church/faith community
- Theatre/Lassen
- Senior/Wildwood (PC CDC)
- Plumas Arts/Blue Goose
- Plumas Bank/U.S. Bank
- Holiday Market

Parking Lot



Looking Ahead to ROCE Workshop #2

During ROCE Workshop #2, we will examine value chains and value chain partners, demand (critical to success), problems and solutions, and start to build out projects and project teams. Projects will utilize existing assets in the community to: support new or current businesses, carry out activities mentioned in planning documents, and/or address needs in the community, to create community wealth. What opportunities do you see in the Chester-Lake Almanor Basin Area? Could all or part of the project be implemented within the next 12 months - 2.5 years?

Homework Assignment from ROCE Workshop #1

Invite representatives from missing sectors or identities to the next workshop session. You can build from the list of who to invite on page 14. Start thinking about different catalytic community economic development projects that you might want to collaboratively identify, develop, and possibly lead. Reflect on what opportunities or projects you are starting to see emerge? Ask: what are other community members saying?