

Thank you for joining us today for this talk: Outdoor Economy Growth Engine for the Big Bear Valley.

Jay, Jan, and I would like to thank you and look forward to spending the next hour and a half with you. My name is Siri Eggebraten. Throughout the course of the Big Bear Valley Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Equestrian Master Plan process, I was working for the City of Big Bear Lake as an Associate Planner. Jay Renkens, with MIG, was the Project Manager and Jan Hancock, of Hancock Resources LLC was an equestrian specialist. She helped us to ensure that network we created and the economic development opportunities we identified were beneficial to locals as well as to visiting equestrians and related specialty businesses.

This session is organized in # parts. First, I will give you some background on the Big Bear Valley, the impetus for the Big Bear Valley Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Equestrian Master Plan, and the project from the agency perspective.

Second, Jay will describe the planning process and talk about the content of the Master Plan, including economic development strategies that emerged from our Recreation Industry Advisory Committee.

Third, Jan will focus on the equestrian components of the plan

Then, we will shift to a larger group discussion about what we learned from the process and lessons that you may takeaway and apply in your respective communities.

In preparation for this presentation, I reflected on the idea of the Master Plan being a growth engine. Growth is a pretty simple concept. It means to increase, to expand. It is also a development process.

Engines are machines that convert energy into motion. They are also understood as things that produce a specific outcome. Hopefully desirable ones.

When I think of engines, I typically see images of the industrial revolution. I think of cars, trains, and burning fuels to make things go forward. Regardless of your opinion about industry and our American car-consuming society, I ask that you put a different picture in your head.

A sewing machine....and not just any sewing machine. Picture a treadle.

Now I ask you a silly question. What does a treadle make? Nothing. What is a treadle used to make?

Human energy moves the treadle, which in turn causes a needle to stitch fabric together to make items of protection, comfort, and decoration.

The Big Bear Valley Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Equestrian Master Plan is like the treadle. It takes human power, coordination of resources, raw materials, a bit of creativity, and a lot of commitment to produce trails, trail related amenities, and opportunities for economic growth. Human power, raw materials, design elements, and a variety of other necessary components of growth are provided by businesses, non-profits, and government agencies. Each of us in this room represent one, two, or three of these sectors and we all play an important role in producing positive change.

Setting aside the metaphor of the treadle. Let's turn to the story of the Big Bear Valley and its Master Plan of trails.

Big Bear is located in the San Bernardino Mountains about 100 miles east of Los Angeles and about 80 miles from where we are today. At 6000 feet above sea level and a mountain climb away from major populations, modern economies in the Valley started with logging, mining, cattle ranching, fox farming and other related activities. In the mid- to late-1800s, access to Big Bear was not for the faint of heart and required people to climb difficult, mountainous terrain. While moderate success was had for people in these early enterprises, they were not sustainable.

With advances in technology, the turn of the center through the 1920s, access to Big Bear became easier. Also, the nation was experiencing an significant lifestyle change, leisure and recreation, and Big Bear's tourist economy was born.

Over the last eighty years, Big Bear has become a winter destination for skiing, snowboarding, and white Christmases.

The lake and special events draw people to Big Bear in the summer. While water sports and snow sports have been very successful, the local economy is overly dependent on these two attractions.

Mountain biking, road cycling, and other outdoor activities exist in the Valley, but they have not been nurtured by the community and we have run into some relatively significant problems that prevent major growth for our outdoor recreation economy. At times, roads are heavily crowded with cars and bicyclists. When the roads aren't crowded, traffic flows very quickly on our main streets. We lack sidewalks on the majority of routes through the Valley. And, while we have many trails to enjoy on and off pavement, we've generated frustration among visitors with poor signage.

Much of our building stock is outdated and our hospitality industry is a mixed bag. We have large population of dedicated and highly motivated community members, but human capital only goes so far...you need to do much more than pump the treadle to sew a quilt!

The Big Bear Valley Trails Foundation coordinated an impressive effort to put up signs for Class III bike routes, but the organization recognized that it needed to get much more organized to make more significant, long-term changes.

The City agreed. With the County of San Bernardino as co-applicant, the City of Big Bear Lake applied for and was awarded a Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant by Caltrans. Everyone was surprised and many were excited by a certain component of the proposed plan, economic development. Economic Development was included in the scope of work for the Master Plan because trails and trail related businesses support jobs, contribute to tax revenues, increase land values, and contribute to community well-being, thereby lowering the cost of social and community services.

With that, I'll turn the presentation over to Jay to talk about the Master Planning process.