**A Town Plaza for Year-Round Activities on Main Street, Chester**

**The Need**

The Lake Almanor Community is in need of a place to meet, celebrate and recreate. Our economy has suffered since the decline of logging. Our best option for the immediate future is a more thriving tourism market across more than just our short summer season.

We have many empty buildings on Main Street. The population of the Lake Almanor Basin has an aging demographic with a rise in those over 60 and a decline in those under. Many families complain of not enough to do for their children, especially during the off seasons, and many of our youth graduate, go off to college and do not return.

As a community we could spend money on beautification, streetscapes, façade improvements, big events, and marketing. However, the most important thing we can and should do, the one thing that will have the most impact on our local and traveling populations is the programing of on-going activities, on Main Street where people shop, eat and look for entertainment.

The top things that visitors look for in a town are shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian friendly environment, especially during the 4 – 9 pm hours. If we set a goal to fill this need in our town, we could eventually see empty buildings fill, restaurants open and thrive, while serving our youth and families. And have a more connected local population as well.

**Town Plaza**

A Public or Town Plaza is the vehicle for delivering such programming and it is do-able, even on a budget. The average Town Plaza in larger cities cost $5-8 million to build, with some at or over $30 million. Our community could build one for less than $200, 000, including the programing. This does not include the purchase or lease of the land. To create this plaza, we will need:

1. A location
2. A people friendly surface & cover
3. Insurance
4. Power & Water
5. Safety barriers
6. A stage
7. Lighting
8. Storage
9. Activities, stuff to do
10. Public restrooms

**Activities/Programing**

The below activities have been discussed, but the list is far from complete. However, it gives the idea of the scope of programming that can be accomplished. The key in the beginning will be to create programs that run 250 days a year, setting a major portion of them during the hours between 4 – 9 pm, Thursday – Saturdays.

Winter & Fall

Fall Farmer’s Markets

Music, dance & drama performances

Holiday Ice Skating Rink

Oktoberfest nights

Programming for schools & service organizations

Christmas Tree Decorating Contests/Fundraisers

Halloween Costume Contests & activities

Bon Fire Activities

Crafting Activities

Summer

Weekly Farmer’s Market

Craft Fairs and crafting activities

Water feature for child’s play

Rock climbing wall

Music, dance & drama performances

Programming for schools & service organizations

Bounce Houses

Game or activity sets available for daily public use

**Location**

The location under discussion. Our intent is to set the Plaza as close as possible to the middle of town, close to shopping, coffee shops and restaurants.

226 Main Street is the first choice. It is on the corner of Main Street & Willow Street. At .83 acres it is the ideal size and location for the Plaza opening opportunities for parking as well as connection to ARPD and Chester Park resources. It is for sale and listed at $300K.

**Managing & Funding Organizations**

This project will be a joint effort of several community organizations. The proposed primary organizations to be utilized for planning, programing, maintenance and funding will be the Lake Almanor Area Chamber of Commerce, the Almanor Recreation and Parks District, and the Lake Almanor Community Foundation.

Current Committee Members & Project Files can be found on the Chamber’s website on the [Town Plaza Project Page](https://www.chamberorganizer.com/projects/moreinfo.php?org_id=CLAC&pid=4785031).

**Plaza Funding Needs**

**Land Purchase**

Approximately $300,000

**Improvements**

Approximately $230,000

* Open air building
* A people friendly surface
* Insurance
* Power & Water
* Safety barriers
* Security cameras
* Stage
* Lighting
* Water feature
* Storage
* Trash receptacles
* Activities, stuff to do
* Public restrooms

**Revenues & Maintenance TBD**

**Raising Funds**

 **Events:**

* Community Scarecrow Competition – October 2019
* Community Christmas Tree Decorating Competition – December 2019
* Cabin Fever Dance Fund Raiser – February 2020
* On-Going….

**Crowd Funding:**

Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet. It is a form of crowdsourcing and alternative finance. Building Funds to be returned if goals not met.

**Brick Fundraising Campaign:**

The plaza will need a people friendly surface. If we utilize pavers or bricks we could sell 100 engraved bricks of 4” x 8” for $100, 100 8” x 8” bricks for $250 and 100 12” x 12” bricks for $500 and net $53,375. These are building funds to be returned if goal not met.

**Sponsors:**

The committee is currently looking for funding from corporate and business sponsors who will be recognized on permanent signage and on-going activity boards. To be returned if fund raising goals are not met.

**Grants:**

Prop 68 Funds. There are several opportunities for Grants from Proposition 68 funding. The Almanor Recreation and Parks District has just received a large grant and is ready to submit for another that dove-tails with the infrastructure and activities of a Town Plaza. In addition, the Feather River Tourism Association, once the Tourism District is funded in 2020, is looking to submit a grant for tourism infrastructure needs of which a Plaza could be a component.

The Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) is a private, nonprofit foundation that was established in 2004 as part of a Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) settlement. They have two goals: to ensure that over 140,000 acres of California's pristine watershed lands are conserved for the public good through a Land Conservation Program, and to invest in outdoor programs that serve California's young people through a Youth Investment Program.

**Activities Revenues:**

Income will be produced from vendor fees from public markets and participation fees for selected activities such as ice skating.

Small yearly grants from Feather River Tourism Investment District Funds.