



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: November 18, 2025

DATE: March 20, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Dave Solaro, Assistant County Manager

THROUGH: Kate Thomas, Interim County Manager

SUBJECT: Recommendation to authorize the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners to execute a non-binding letter of intent from the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada for the purposes of assisting Washoe County to assure the appropriate use and positioning of surplus land for the overall benefit of the community by developing the land to the highest and best use. (All Commission Districts). FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

The proposed action aligns with Washoe County's strategic objectives, particularly in addressing economic impacts. By facilitating the execution of a non-binding letter of intent between the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN) and Washoe County, this initiative seeks to optimize the use of surplus land for the benefit of the community. The collaboration aims to ensure that underutilized properties are positioned for their highest and best use, thereby promoting economic growth, housing availability, and community development.

The strategic objective supported by this action is Economic Impacts. This initiative is designed to foster job creation, attract private investment, and enhance the overall economic vitality of Washoe County. By leveraging EDawn's expertise in economic development, the County can address critical needs such as housing shortages and infrastructure improvements while reducing the financial and operational burdens associated with maintaining surplus land.

Furthermore, the partnership between Washoe County and EDawn reflects a commitment to innovative public-private collaboration. The proposed program structure includes regular assessments of surplus land and the development of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects that align with community priorities. This approach ensures that surplus properties are utilized effectively, contributing to long-term fiscal sustainability and community well-being.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Economic Impacts: Support a thriving community.

AGENDA ITEM # _____

PREVIOUS ACTION

On January 28, 2025, the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners held a strategic planning retreat and discussed Approaches to Public/Private Partnerships.

On August 22, 2023, the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners received a presentation regarding the County's property program, which included an overview of surplus properties identified for potential future use. The presentation highlighted several parcels of land owned by Washoe County that were deemed surplus to current needs and could be considered for disposition through the County's Strategic Plan process.

During this meeting, Commissioners discussed the importance of utilizing surplus properties to address community needs, including affordable housing and other strategic priorities. No formal action was taken during the August 22, 2023 meeting, as the presentation was intended to provide an informational overview of the property program and its alignment with the County's strategic objectives. Commissioners acknowledged the need for further evaluation and planning to ensure surplus properties are positioned for the highest and best use to benefit the community.

BACKGROUND

The Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN) and Washoe County have collaborated to address the strategic utilization of surplus land within the county. This partnership is guided by a non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI), which outlines the framework for identifying, assessing, and activating underutilized or surplus properties for projects that benefit the community. The LOI emphasizes the importance of leveraging public-private partnerships (PPP) to ensure that surplus land is developed to its highest and best use, thereby reducing maintenance costs and enhancing economic and social outcomes.

Washoe County has historically engaged in similar initiatives to optimize land use for public benefit. For example, previous property transactions, such as the conveyance of land for civic purposes under Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 244.284, demonstrate the county's commitment to aligning land management with community needs. These efforts have included partnerships with entities like the City of Reno and Truckee Meadows Water Authority to facilitate projects that serve public purposes, such as infrastructure improvements and conservation efforts.

The LOI further specifies that EDAWN will provide economic expertise to assist Washoe County in identifying surplus properties and determining their suitability for development. This process includes annual assessments of county-owned land and collaboration with other governmental entities to identify additional surplus properties. Once identified, EDAWN will recommend parcels for transfer to Activate LLC, a subsidiary formed to oversee PPP projects. Activate LLC will manage the development process, ensuring compliance with county regulations while expediting project delivery to meet public needs.

Through this collaboration, Washoe County aims to address critical community challenges, including housing availability, economic growth, and infrastructure development. The LOI underscores the importance of good faith negotiations and mutual

agreement on project terms, while maintaining flexibility for both parties to withdraw or modify the agreement as necessary. This approach reflects the county's strategic objective of fostering a thriving community through innovative land management practices.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed collaboration between Washoe County and the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN) through the execution of a non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI) is anticipated to have financial implications that require careful consideration. While the LOI itself is non-binding and does not obligate either party to financial commitments, the subsequent agreements and actions stemming from this initiative may involve direct and indirect fiscal impacts.

Washoe County will incur costs associated with the identification, assessment, and potential transfer of surplus land to Activate LLC, a subsidiary of EDAWN. These costs may include administrative expenses, legal fees, and staff time dedicated to the evaluation and processing of surplus land transactions. Additionally, the County may need to allocate resources for expedited plan checks, permit issuance, and inspection services to support Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects as outlined in the LOI.

The LOI acknowledges that Activate LLC may request financial incentives from Washoe County to facilitate agreed-upon uses of surplus land. These incentives could include reductions or temporary eliminations of property taxes, fees, or other customary costs associated with development. While the County is not obligated to provide such incentives, it is required to consider these requests in good faith, which may result in additional fiscal impacts depending on the scope and scale of the PPP projects.

Furthermore, the LOI specifies that any costs or expenses incurred by either party during the negotiation and implementation phases are undertaken at their sole risk and expense. This provision mitigates immediate financial liability for Washoe County but underscores the importance of strategic planning to ensure that future agreements align with the County's budgetary priorities and long-term financial strategy.

The fiscal impact of transferring surplus land to Activate LLC will also depend on the valuation of the properties and their potential for generating economic benefits. Properties identified as surplus may currently require maintenance, security, or other public services, which represent ongoing costs to the County. By repurposing these lands for development, the County could reduce these expenditures while fostering economic growth and community benefits. However, the financial outcomes will be contingent on the successful execution of PPP projects and the ability to attract private developers to invest in these initiatives.

In summary, while the LOI itself does not impose immediate fiscal obligations, the broader initiative to position surplus land for its highest and best use carries potential financial impacts that must be managed through strategic oversight and collaboration. Washoe County should ensure that any future agreements derived from this LOI are structured to balance economic development objectives with fiscal responsibility.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Board of County Commissioners authorize the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners to execute a non-binding letter of intent from the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada for the purposes of assisting Washoe County to assure the appropriate use and positioning of surplus land for the overall benefit of the community by developing the land to the highest and best use

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with the staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be "Move to authorize the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners to execute the non-binding letter of intent from the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN) for the purposes of assisting Washoe County in ensuring the appropriate use and positioning of surplus land to benefit the community by developing the land to its highest and best use."