

Community Focus Statement D: Grow the local economy in a manner consistent with the rural desert character.

Action Statement D.1: Enhance ecotourism by creating an economic development and marketing strategy that promotes the local environment and associated activities.

D

Benchmark: An economic development and marketing strategy is created.

Champion: Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

Estimated Cost: \$5,000 - \$150,000 dependent upon consulting resources needed.



North entrance to Joshua Tree National Park off Park Drive near the Joshua Tree community. Joshua Tree National Park is visited by over two million people a year and is a major attractor for the community. Photo source: [Shane Burkhardt](#)

Ecotourism is “the responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (TIES 2015). The community of Joshua Tree is the gateway to Joshua Tree National Park, one of the region’s most pristine National Parks, which attracts approximately two million visitors a year. The park sits in the heart of almost untouched desert habitat that attracts everyone from casual hikers to extreme rock climbers.

An important part of attracting businesses to an area for ecotourism-related activities is having the resources available to promote the area as a tourism hot spot. Much of this is accomplished by Joshua Tree National Park, but the community can further establish itself as a

destination by focusing on guiding future investment and development around outdoor activities that take place in the park.

Outside resources, such as from TIES, are available to help areas foster, legitimize, and promote environmentally friendly businesses. These certifications not only provide advertising material for businesses, they establish strategies and objectives to enhance the abilities of the area. Important steps in assessing and growing tourism-related businesses to create an increase in tourist activity include:

- Conducting a market analysis of existing conditions.
- Organizing community stakeholders, including residents, nonprofit leaders, and decision-makers, to gather resources and support to assist new businesses.
- Easing requirements and supplying resources to guide business owners through regulatory difficulties, including how to acquire benefits and use permits.
- Establishing a clear marketing plan to pursue companies or recreational areas that are deemed to have the most potential benefit for the community.

- Focusing on creating effective and informational policies and procedures.

In order to guide the type of investment that the community wants to see, it is important to develop a plan through the local Chamber of Commerce which targets certain types of businesses for attraction. This task could involve working with the Chambers of Commerce from Twentynine Palms and Yucca Valley to steer unwanted investment, such as chain stores, toward those areas. This effort would help to ensure that the character of the Joshua Tree community remains intact, which reinforces the identity that the community is trying to create and market to outside visitors.

Action Statements D1, D2, and D3 could be completed together.

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Create a Development committee of local business leaders and interested parties.	Champion	Month 1	Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce http://joshuatreechamber.org/
2. Research ecotourism resources and guidebooks (see objective resources).	Economic Development Committee	Months 2 – 3	National Park Service https://www.nps.gov/jotr/index.htm
3. Conduct a market analysis of the existing conditions in the area and share the data with the San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency (EDA).	Economic Development Committee	Months 3 – 6	The International Ecotourism Society https://www.ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism
4. Establish monthly calls between the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce and the San Bernardino County EDA to discuss local available properties.	Economic Development Committee	Month 6	Center for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development http://www.ecotourism.org/sites/ecotourism.org/files/document/Certification/Ecotourism%20Handbook%20III%20-%20Practical%20steps%20for%20Marketing%20Tourism%20Certification.pdf
5. Organize community stakeholders, including residents, nonprofit leaders, and decision-makers, to gather resources and support to assist new businesses.	Economic Development Committee	Month 6	
6. Create a list of marketing improvements that business owners in Joshua Tree would like to accomplish and prioritize.	Economic Development Committee	On-going	
7. Accomplish two tasks on the list of projects per year.	Economic Development Committee	On-going	