

# *El Dorado County*

## *The Land of Gold and The Good Life!*

*What Makes El Dorado County Special?* People who live in El Dorado County especially appreciate the rural nature of the County. Many people reside in El Dorado County to enjoy the rural lifestyle as well as outdoor recreational opportunities and natural resources. In addition to the rural lifestyle, fantastic outdoor recreation and natural beauty, El Dorado County offers relatively low home prices and low traffic, especially in contrast to more urban areas found in the Bay Area and Southern California.

*Outdoor Recreation and Agriculture:* El Dorado County offers world class natural resources and tremendous opportunity for recreation (e.g., hiking, biking, skiing, horseback riding, white water river rafting, kayaking and other water sports, fishing). Many people first come to El Dorado County to enjoy this outdoor recreation, as well as award-winning wineries and agritourism such as Apple Hill. Then, once experiencing what the County has to offer, many people chose to relocate to live in El Dorado County. The rural lifestyle and vast opportunities for outdoor recreation and agriculture offer an exceptional lifestyle with beautiful natural landscapes and open views.

As a local El Dorado County realtor of 37 years, writes:

*"Welcome to one of the prettiest "quality of life" rural small town areas in the entire country. This is the heart of "gold country" at its best with mountains, rivers, vineyards, forests, wilderness areas, lots of open space and excellent recreation. Only a few hours east of San Francisco; so driving to the ocean is always an option. At the same time, it is an easy drive west to Sacramento and a short drive to the east to gorgeous Lake Tahoe for skiing and wonderful wilderness hiking areas. This is the place to raise a family or retire with four moderate seasons. People are friendly here and the pace of life is a little slower."*

*Scenic Views:* Country roads offer gorgeous scenic views. People come to drive leisurely on the country roads just for the sense of natural beauty. Traveling on Highway 49 between Highway 50 over to Highway 80 is like taking a leisurely drive in the countryside and going back to a time more peaceful. Traveling on Highway 193 by motorcycle or car is a delight.

*Close Proximity to Major Shopping and Business:* While El Dorado County offers beautiful scenic views of rolling hills and heritage oak trees, the County is also close to large shopping centers such as Folsom, Roseville, and Sacramento. Sacramento is 45 minutes away and is the capital of California and seat of politics in California. San Francisco is three hours away and Reno is two.

*High-end Shopping and Residential Gated Communities:* For those who want a Rodeo Drive shopping experience within El Dorado County, there is El Dorado Hills. Exceptional

boutiques and restaurants, as well as a Mercedes-Benz dealership and movie theater, are located just off Highway 50 in El Dorado Hills. There are high-end gated communities and golf courses in El Dorado Hills.

### *Why Live and Work and Play in El Dorado County?*

*Rural Lifestyle and Home-based Business:* Most who live in El Dorado County say they value the rural lifestyle. For those who want to live and work from home, the County allows for a home-based business. Thus, residents can live and work from home – no commute required and parents can be at home for their children.

*Low Traffic:* Traffic is relatively mild throughout most of the county, especially in contrast to urban areas such as the Bay Area and Southern California, and even Sacramento.

*Diverse Land Use:* There are three types of land use in El Dorado County– commercial centers, rural centers, and rural residential. Commercial and rural centers are zoned for commercial use. Larger businesses typically operate in commercial centers near Highway 50, from El Dorado Hills up to Placerville. Rural centers are smaller and distributed geographically throughout the County. Rural residential offers the opportunity to live and conduct an agricultural or other type of business on residential property – no downtime commuting. Home businesses allowed on rural residential properties may allow up to two employees depending upon the size of the residential property. Some properties allow agricultural support services and other smaller businesses on their residential properties.

*Early California History:* The County has a substantial history to offer, unique to all others. Gold was discovered in what is now Marshall Gold Discovery Park. The Gold Rush started in El Dorado County which brought life to California. There are still many pioneering families who came to El Dorado to find gold and still live here to raise their families on land which has been in the family for generations. Life is good. El Dorado County does not have a highly transient population, but new folks are welcomed to the community.

*Sense of Family:* A recent survey of County residents and business owners say the quality they especially value, and which makes the County different from highly urbanized and densely populated areas, is a 'sense of family' throughout the community.

*Population:* Assets include a great outdoors with many opportunities for recreation in beautiful areas of natural resources - this has appeal to those of all ages. With relatively affordable home prices and beautiful rural environments, there is great appeal to the young as well as those retiring and ready for the good life. When people move to El Dorado County, they tend to remain here.

*Diversity:* The County is a highly diverse county - geographically, age, education, professional background, source of income, and size of residential property. Still, El Dorado County is far more rural than urban. A recent Citizen Engagement Survey (12/2015) indicates many people 'work in government,

are self-employed, or retired'. Others make their living in the construction trade, while others enjoy agriculture or another business endeavor at home or run a small local family business.

*Agriculture:* Agriculture is highly valued in El Dorado County. Agriculture of many types, including grape growing, cattle grazing, crops, and raising animals. Agriculture may occur on larger as well as small acreage properties. Much of the agriculture occurs on small, residential properties, which can include two home sites and granny units.

*Timberland:* Fifty percent of El Dorado County consists of timber and forest.

*Business:* Larger retail businesses, such as Target and Walmart, are typically located in professional business and retail centers near Highway 50. Medical and service business centers are also located closer to Highway 50. In contrast, North County, in closer proximity to Highway 80, tends to be more rural residential, with localized shopping in smaller rural business centers. Most business in rural lands of El Dorado County are of a smaller, more personalized nature. Many businesses are family owned and operated.

*Housing:* In North County close to Highway 80, most of our housing is moderately priced, generally ranging from \$300,000-\$450,000 on small acreage. North County, closer to Highway 80, is a single family home community on rural acreage. North County, including Cool, has a very high ratio of horses to residents. There are exceptional and vast riding trails nearby. El Dorado Hills near Highway 50, on the other hand, is relatively new home construction in residential developments, some of them gated and priced over \$800,000. There are not many large apartment complexes or high-rises. Residential properties can range from small parcels and upwards to large acreage. There are high-end gated communities with golf courses, ranging \$1,000,000 and over.

*Opportunity to Work from Home:* A new zoning ordinance allows for operating a business from home. This ordinance even allows for employees, depending upon the size of the parcel. With proper permits and zoning, and in some cases, allowed by right, the following can occur on where one also lives: student instruction, a health resort and retreat center, bed and breakfast inn, agricultural homestay, guest ranch, crop production, animal raising, lodging facility, agricultural support services, vet clinic, ranch marketing and winery, to name a few.

## *Business Opportunities in El Dorado County*

El Dorado County has commercial land waiting to be developed especially near Highway 50. Opportunities to purchase existing businesses also exist. There is some leased business space available throughout the County. The new home-based business ordinance allows for opportunities to work from home throughout the County. The majority of businesses are family owned and run. Although El Dorado County does not presently have large-scale industries, research campuses, think-tanks or major universities, this means the potential to create them could exist.

Larger commercial centers are primarily located close to Highway 50 between El Dorado Hills and Placerville, but there are also smaller rural centers distributed throughout the County. Rural Centers,

such as Cool, provide more localized shopping and dining out. There are many one of a kind, unique, boutique, family owned stores and restaurants in El Dorado County. A recently updated zoning ordinance permits more economic opportunities distributed throughout the County. Revisions to the zoning code allow more business sites, as well as a reduction of some fees, and thus starting a small business is more affordable.

A survey of county residents (December, 2015), notes the rural nature of the county is significant to both old-timers and newcomers. Industries which could promote employment, but not destroy the character of the region include: destination tourism/promote tourism, agricultural industries, technological industries, energy farming (solar), lumber and timber production, health care education/four year, home-based businesses, recreational industries, farming and livestock – small scale/organic, medical technology and boutique medicine, research and development, bio fuels/waste wood and brush/forest slash.

The aging population offers an opportunity – an aging population certainly needs more services. As they age, many people want to downsize to a smaller home with no acreage to care for, and still remain in the county. Assisted living and memory care is in higher demand than inventory presently provides in El Dorado County. There is need for moderate housing, for the aging as well as the younger population.

All said, El Dorado County is a wonderful place to Live, Work and Play.