

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM NO.

Meeting Date: October 25, 2011

Subject/Title: Presentation on the City's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

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RECOMMENDATION

Receive a report on the City's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, and provide feedback to staff as necessary.

PREVIOUS ACTION

This report is the fourth in a series of informational presentations to the City Council on economic development issues. Previous reports covered the City's business retention strategy; major economic trends and target industries; and the City's economic development website and marketing strategy.

BACKGROUND

Brentwood's economic development activities have traditionally been guided by three policy documents: the General Plan (in particular, the Economic Development Element); the City Council Goals and Strategic Plan; and the Redevelopment Five-Year Implementation Plan.

Based upon these Council-approved documents – combined with research, analysis, and input from the local business community – staff has developed a proposed Economic Development Strategy. This strategy provides a single, comprehensive policy document to guide staff and budget priorities for business attraction and retention. This report provides a brief summary of the proposed Strategy, in order to solicit feedback from the City Council.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The major components of the Economic Development Strategy include: a vision that is based on Brentwood's position in the regional marketplace; key industries that should be targeted for business attraction; and key initiatives.

1. Brentwood's Position in the Regional Marketplace

Brentwood is generally considered to be the best place to live and shop in the East Contra Costa region. According to the managing director of Grubb & Ellis, "Brentwood commands the best location, best demographics, and the highest quality shopping environment of any city between Walnut Creek and Sacramento."

To become a major employment center, Brentwood must compete with many other cities as a potential site for business. Accordingly, Brentwood's business attraction strategy must capitalize on Brentwood's most compelling assets, such as: its family-friendly schools and neighborhoods, beautiful natural setting, business-friendly city government, and its location.

Brentwood's location is strategic and convenient to business – it is a place where the Bay Area, Tri-Valley, Delta, and Central Valley markets come together. Due to the recent improvements to

CA Highway 4, the travel time between Brentwood and Walnut Creek during non-commute hours has been reduced from 50 minutes to as low as 25 minutes. Further improvements to Highway 4 and eBART are underway. In addition, improvements to Vasco Road have linked Brentwood and the I-580 corridor – which will provide Brentwood the opportunity to capture high-technology business growth from the Sandia and Lawrence Livermore National Labs as well as businesses in the Tri-Valley area.

2. Key Industry Clusters

Over the past 20 years, Contra Costa's economy has been driven by several industries (such as manufacturing, construction, and financial services) that can no longer be relied upon for continued job growth. As a result, the City needs to realistically identify additional industries that can help create new jobs in the future. Based on initial research, staff has identified several industries that seem to have potential in Brentwood. These industries include:

- Health care
- Medical device manufacturing
- Solar, energy-based, and green/clean-tech industries
- Agricultural enterprises
- Retail
- Professional & business services
- Educational services
- Machinery & short-run manufacturing

In addition, the East County region has seen a dramatic growth in the number of home-based businesses and “micro-enterprises” (having less than five employees). These small businesses have a promising potential to create jobs in Brentwood.

3. Proposed Strategic Initiatives

A. Marketing & Public Information

The City would continue to build its image and identity as a desirable location for business, using a broad range of strategies that are targeted specifically to developers, commercial real estate brokers, major office and industrial executives, architects, site selection consultants, and other key business communities. Specific initiatives include:

- Web & Online Media
- Press and Publicity
- Advertising in various print, broadcast, and online media.
- Brochures
- Direct Outreach to local business owners.
- Shop Brentwood Campaign (including press, advertizing, merchandise to promote local shopping, and/or other initiatives).

B. Business Retention

The City would work with existing local businesses to help them stay in Brentwood and, where appropriate, expand. This business retention program would emphasize building and maintaining strong relationships with local businesses; continuing to provide excellent customer service and to expedite and resolve permit issues; linking local businesses to key financial, training, and consulting resources; and other assistance. Specific initiatives include:

- Permit Center & Customer Service
- Outreach & Analysis
- Business Retention Visits
- Business Partnerships
- Small Business Seminars
- Business License Grant Program
- Business Recognition Award Program

C. Office & Industrial Development

Staff will continue to participate in trade associations and other venues to connect with leaders and “opinion makers” in various key industries. This will boost Brentwood’s visibility and allow staff to become more familiar with the needs and key selling points of these industries. There may also be opportunities to advertise or place stories in trade publications. Specific initiatives include:

- Industry Outreach & Trade Associations
- Trade Shows
- Outreach to Development Community
- Livermore Valley Open Campus
- Regional Partnerships
- Industry Trends Analysis
- Workforce Development
- Partnerships with Local Property Owners & Businesses
- Development of City Properties
- Financial Incentives

D. Retail Development

The City will pursue several initiatives to protect and strengthen Brentwood’s position as a major regional destination for upscale retail. Staff will work with the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), as well as retail brokers, consultants, and developers to help attract key retailers to Brentwood. Staff will also package information on key retail opportunities for presentation to brokers and other in the retail community. Specific initiatives include:

- Marketing & Outreach to Retail Community
- Downtown Support
- Brentwood Boulevard Corridor
- Financial Assistance
- Research & Analysis

E. Other Initiatives

- *Infrastructure Planning:* The City will continue to incorporate the needs of key industries into its planning for water, sewer, dry utility and transportation infrastructure.
- *Permits & Fees:* The City would continue to explore opportunities to further reduce the cost and time associated with various permits and entitlements. Staff will also work with various County agencies, such as Contra Costa Health Services, to identify ways to streamline the permit process for various County permits that are necessary for certain types of development (restaurants for example).

- *Development Planning for Bypass Properties:* Staff will analyze and develop strategies for two major areas along the Highway 4 Bypass that have been identified as the City's primary job-generating areas: the "Upper Bypass Area" (located roughly between Lone Tree Way and San Jose Avenue) and the "Lower Bypass Area" (at Balfour Road).
- *Hospitality & Tourism:* Staff will continue to explore opportunities for agri-tourism, hotel development, conferences at the City's Community Center and/or Club Los Meganos, recreational events, and other opportunities to attract tourism over the long term.

CONCLUSIONS

Brentwood has great potential to attract high-quality employers in the future. The adoption of a formal Economic Development Strategy will help to manage limited staff and financial resources in the most efficient, effective manner possible; and it will allow the City to sustain a consistent, effective, long-term focus on business attraction and retention.

At this time, staff is requesting input from the City Council on the proposed Economic Development Strategy. Based on the Council's feedback and direction, staff plans to begin implementation of the Strategy and to provide regular updates to the Council on staff's progress in carrying out the City's economic development efforts.

FISCAL IMPACT

This report provides an informational overview of economic development issues and does not involve specific fiscal impacts to the City.