

STAFF REPORT
COUNCIL MEETING DATE:
November 13, 2012

ITEM FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION:

Status report on the City's Economic Vitality Program.

Report prepared by:

Assistant to the City Mgr.

City Manager


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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Action Item ; Non-Action Item

Receive an informational status report regarding the City's Economic Vitality Program and direct staff as determined appropriate.

I. BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION:

The City's Economic Vitality program consists of activities of several City Departments including Community Development, Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Administrative Services, and General Government and is overseen by the City Manager's office; significant responsibilities also being assigned to the Assistant to the City Manager. The pervasive nature of these efforts in the City organization is fundamental to its approach in promoting positive economic growth in the Carpinteria community. In 2009, the City also took specific actions aimed at supporting the local economy and in response to the economic recession. All of these Economic Vitality Program efforts are discussed below in the context of the various City Departments.

Community Development

The Community Development Department oversees programs that have a direct impact on the economic vitality of the community that include Planning, Housing, Development Review & Building, and Code Compliance. Programs such as these provide an overall

framework for the physical development of the City, encouraging new private investment and promoting the City as an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Significant projects processed and under construction in the last 24 months have added residential housing opportunities--Lagunitas residences (73 residential units), Vernon Cottages on Seventh Street and the Islands Apartments--as well as a business expansion (Albertsons) and much needed remodel of one of the City's primary retail centers; the Casitas Plaza Shopping Center. Additionally, the Department recently processed affordable housing projects that support area employees and employers. They include Dahlia Court / Phase II (33 units), Casas de las Flores approved for 43 units (Camper Park), and interior improvements at Chapel Court Apartments.

Community Development staff have also processed development projects that have taken advantage of the temporary reduction in the Highway Interchanges & Bridges Development Impact Fee (enacted by the City Council in February 23, 2009), which were initiated in response to then current and projected economic conditions. These projects include the newest Bega Warehouse and Employee Apartments, additions to local businesses Biosphere and Dako, and the approved Carpinteria Arts Center building.

Staff also meets with interested builders and developers in order to facilitate an understanding of applicable City policies, regulations, and processes, and to discuss how new development and businesses can fit into the broader vision the community has for itself. Recent meetings have been held with potential developers about a variety of projects such as a proposed Bluffs III resort (Carpinteria Avenue at Highway 150), a Bluffs II Live/Work project, multiple inquiries regarding Bluffs I (current golf driving range site on Carpinteria Avenue), a potential downtown hotel, the Lynda.com regarding expansion in the Industrial Research Park, and a mixed use project at Carpinteria Avenue and Holly Avenue (vacant lot).

Public Works

The Department of Public Works both directly and indirectly impacts the economy within the City of Carpinteria. The Department has on-going programs to maintain the City that range from cleaning, maintaining and painting downtown infrastructure such as bicycle racks and street lights to infrastructure maintenance such as sidewalk concrete repair, sidewalk in-fill and pavement overlays.

Public Works also continues to work on delivering major capital improvement projects such as the Carpinteria Avenue over Carpinteria Creek Bridge Replacement Project and the regionally significant Linden Avenue and Casitas Pass Road Interchanges Replacement Project. Some recently completed work by the Department that adds to the enhancement of the community include:

- Painting of traffic signals, street lights and various bike racks, news racks and decorative trash cans in the Downtown and Beach areas
- Replacement of several sections of sidewalk and street trees on Linden Avenue in the Downtown area

- Replacement and vacancy infill of street trees throughout the City
- Replacement of the Eighth Street Pedestrian Bridge
- Pavement rehabilitation – Santa Ynez Avenue and Casitas Pass Road Overlays
- Review and approval of repairs to curb, gutter and sidewalks by the Seventh Street Cottages Development Project
- Permitting of Special Events such as the Avocado Festival, Rods and Roses Classic Car Event, the Triathlon, Avon Walk for Breast Cancer and numerous bicycle events

The improvement and maintenance of City infrastructure is critical to attracting and maintaining business, supporting private property values, and promoting the community as a safe and attractive place to visit.

Parks & Recreation

From the Bluffs preserve to the City beach and from the Salt Marsh to the Coastal Vista Trail the City's parks and open space resources make Carpinteria the special place it is and add to the City's overall vitality.

Efforts to ensure the Carpinteria City Beach continues to be regionally significant in meeting the public's expectations as a safe, clean, convenient and relaxing experience is critical to the City's tourism and retail businesses. Dirty sand, unmaintained restrooms and lack of amenities can all contribute to the beach going public choosing to not return. The Parks and Recreation Department continued to provide summer time beach services in 2012 to ensure Carpinteria Beach is the first choice among residents and tourists to drive robust visitor serving retail business, strong vacation rental activity, and stable property values.

Continued efforts to expand the City's trail network along the coast, and the maintenance of sports fields help to promote public health, youth sports, and encourage appreciation of the areas unique environmental resources. In addition, the sports facilities allow for regionally significant special events to occur that provide a boost to the local economy such as the Carpinteria Triathlon, the AYSO Beach Cup Soccer Tournament, the Girls softball Beach Classic tournament, the Avon Walk fundraiser, and Swim Club swim meets at the Community Pool. The recently completed Tomol Interpretive Play Area and the Palm to Linden Trail also contribute significantly to the effort to better integrate the Carpinteria State Beach campground community to the Carpinteria retail areas on Linden Avenue.

Administrative Services

At the Council meeting of February 23, 2009 the City Council voted to undertake various economic stimulus measures including a Local Preference Purchasing Policy. The City Council adopted Resolution No. 5181 adopting a local vendor preference policy on March 9, 2009. The purpose of the policy is to promote the City's use of local vendors whenever feasible and cost effective.

Two examples of work/purchases where the City specifically sought out local vendors pursuant to the policy include the painting of the exterior of City Hall and the purchasing of animal supplies by the Code Compliance staff. A recent City staff analysis of the last 12 months of vendor payments shows that over \$600,000 in payments were made to Carpinteria vendors. The City only makes a greater amount of annual payments to Santa Barbara based entities/businesses, and this is primarily due to the need for legal, law enforcement, and other unique services not available in Carpinteria.

General Government

Under the General Government Department resides the City's HOST and Economic Vitality program. Both of these programs contribute to the City's on-going economic vitality work; the HOST program promotes tourism by enhancing the experience of visitors to the City while the various economic vitality tasks serve to attract and retain suitable businesses. Activities of both programs include:

HOST Program

Every weekend from Memorial Day to the Avocado Festival, City HOSTs are on-hand at the downtown Visitor's Center to greet passersby, answer questions about the Carpinteria Valley and provide information on activities that appeal to a variety of interests.

During the 2012 season, 63 City HOST volunteers made contact with over 4,670 visitors who originated from 12 countries and 28 different states. These 63 HOSTs donated over 1,200 hours of service to promote, celebrate and share the richness and diversity of the Carpinteria Valley.

Additional Economic Vitality Activities

This City program undertakes various activities to assist in the retention of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses to the City. City staff also cooperates with the Carpinteria Valley Chamber of Commerce on topics (such as the Tourism Improvement District) and in a variety of venues that support local business including the meetings of the City/Chamber committee, First Friday committee, the PBIAAB committee, and the Chamber Board where the City Manager is a member.

Various activities related to these additional efforts include the following:

- Work related to the Carpinteria First Committee (which when it began included original members of the City's buy local committee which was established in response to the economic downturn and projected economic conditions)

First Friday events—The First Friday and Saturday Sidewalk Sales event began in June 2009 and take place 5-8 PM every first Friday of the month; the Saturday Sidewalk Sales component has evolved to more of occasional themed Saturday events. Regarding First Friday, the majority of participating businesses stay open late and offer a promotion or refreshment. Events typically include music or other entertainment. The purpose of the events is to encourage tourists and locals alike to patronize local businesses that are participating in the program as well as Carpinteria merchants in general.

Saturday promotional events—these events have included a crafters fair at Casitas Plaza Shopping Center and a Snow Day which includes a snow play area and synthetic skating rink.

Event / Community Promotion--a variety of promotional venues have been used to support Carpinteria First and Saturday events including:

- a) Radio advertising to promote First Friday / Saturday events
- b) City GATV channel 21 has been used to broadcast First Friday videos to promote this event
- c) Print media/promotional advertising (Coastal View News, Explore Santa Barbara--a New Press publication, Carpinteria Magazine, Chamber of Commerce Destination Guide & Business Directory)
- d) City web page includes links to First Friday / Saturday event map as well as a promotional video
- e) Chamber of Commerce web page also has a link to the First Friday / Saturday event map
- f) First Friday event banners are placed across Linden Avenue and on the community pool
- g) The City Scroll is used to display a First Friday promotion slide

Shop Carpinteria commercial--the Carpinteria First committee initiated the hiring of a local video producer who has completed a Shop Carpinteria video that is anticipated to be aired in November--April through Cox Media and KEYT.

- Staff maintains an Available Commercial Properties inventory on the City's web page. The inventory is updated at various times throughout the year and is available to assist real estate professionals, developers, building owners, businesses looking for commercial space, and the general public 24/7. Updates to the information include adding new inventory and removing properties as needed. The inventory is also periodically emailed directly to various real estate professionals--primarily commercial real estate agents/brokers.
- Staff participates in meetings of the City/Chamber ad-hoc committee and also attends various Chamber of Commerce functions and business related events (e.g., Chamber mixers, Ribbon Cutting events, and State of the City function). Additionally, staff attended the 2012 UCSB Economic Outlook seminar and have attended meetings related to the South Coast Business Forum.
- City and Chamber staff are working together on initiating both a Welcome Wagon program—which will include a variety of information that will be provided to various new businesses to the City—and a Lodging Packet for disbursement to various vacation rentals that will include visitor information.
- Staff meets quarterly with City's sales tax auditor to review sales tax data including revenue fluctuations and revenues.

- Periodic local company visitations have been previously conducted, which have included City staff, Chamber of Commerce representatives, and City Councilmembers. These visits assist in establishing rapport with local companies and present an informal environment to discuss business related concerns and issues. Staff will be working to arrange an upcoming fall or winter business tour.
- City staff is available to provide assistance to new and existing businesses, acting as a City liaison with regard to business issues, relocation, expansion needs, etc.

V. PRINCIPAL PARTIES EXPECTED AT MEETING:

Various Carpinteria First Committee representatives