

Attachment 13 – Work Session Notes

The draft Business Development Action Plan was reviewed in three different public work sessions:

- September 21, 2011 – Plan review with the Economic Development Board
- October 12, 2011 – Three public work sessions overviewing each section of the plan – Downtown/Tourism, Commercial Centers and Benicia Industrial Park
- October 25, 2011 – Special Joint Meeting, City Council & Economic Development Board

The following are notes and comments provided at each work session.

September 21, 2011 – Economic Development Board Work Session Notes

1. Appendix 1 Economic Indicators, could additional information be added to the school information about the quality of the schools. Additional comments on quality of schools compared to Danville was cited from audience.
2. Economic Indicators, benchmark to other areas (competitors or comparative areas) vs. Solano. Feel that Benicia should “stretch” itself to the next level.
3. Update of the zoning ordinance is a priority and deserves attention.
4. Projections on tax revenue numbers 2010 reflect refinery expansion which will end this year.
5. Audience comment: Can do the Sustainable Management Program immediately through the Good Neighborhood, recommend the Board submit application, very interested in funding...have done two already with residence, Ron Myska volunteered to be the pilot project.
6. Question from audience “What would be the comparison of sales tax leakage to other cities” (*cities would need to be selected and report run, there could be major difference depending on the retail mix of the cities chosen for comparison*).
7. Staff should be concierge to people coming to the city.
8. Need to fund it.
9. Change “work together to get results” to “working together to get results”.
10. Concierge for BIP.
11. What are good “measures” for tourism.
12. Question on marketing – would there be key message platform?

October 12, 2011 – Public Work Sessions

1. Downtown / Tourism Work Session

- Impediments to new business locating or expanding in downtown – Historic Preservation and Design Review Board
- Curb Appeal is needed at the major entrance off the freeway
- Update – the Park Committee has received a grant for Waterfront Master Plan
- A concern brought up about the Traffic Flow of Main Street
- Comments from several attendees the “modern-type” businesses that attract the young working classes is not located in downtown
- Socially responsible planning should be done for key buildings in the downtown
- Business Retention is a priority, however, not sure “who is on first”. Need to clearly articulate the team and what tools are available to assist business (note one business in attendance who needed immediate help with relocation)
- Gap in the business mix of the 12-19 year old group demographic, which represents 10% of the populations who feel not welcome downtown and creates wandering teens

- Question from an attendee: is there a ratio of retail to service business for a vibrant downtown? Also are there methods to control the ratio via zoning
- Recommendation from attendee that the plan, or some planning should be done to bridge all the economic generators, particularly the downtown and Industrial Park

2. Commercial Centers Work Session

- Discussion about Buying Local. An attendee mentioned a website call New Rules Project, The Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), www.newrules.org.
- The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies is also a good resource for Think Local First. www.livingeconomies.org
- An attendee asked about implementing a Buy Local Campaign – several other attendees noted there was a campaign by the Chamber Benicia First. The Buy Local Campaign may need to be “refreshed”. <http://www.newrules.org/retail/tools-growing-local-businesses>
- Agreement that there needed to be better Internal Marketing to Benicia’s residents
- Technology in the Downtown may also need to be evaluated
- Trader Joe’s is a desired business and should be targeted
- Recommendation from attendee to look at what big boxes offer that we would like to have in the community and that are not currently being offered, be entrepreneurial and design own small footprint stores to provide those goods
- Should also have connections with businesses in Napa to promote their products locally

3. Benicia Industrial Park

- Communications on the status of the DTSC needs to be improved. Quarterly Meeting w/property owners was promised but have been missed. Brad Kilger, City Manager, responded to direct inquiry and status and acknowledged could do a better job of informing owners and those affected
- Rail most likely not viable
- Toll are a cost factor that is being considered by companies when looking for a location.

October 25, 2011 Joint City Council & Economic Development Board Work Session Notes

The draft Business Development Action Plan was reviewed with the Council and EDB by sections, with comments from public at end of each section:

Section 1 – Situational Analysis

- Reallocation of staff time
- Parking study (revisit)
- Timeline – entry to recession late / may come out late
- Historic Overlay affects the location of businesses
- Width of First Street – build-outs, vehicular & pedestrian traffic
- Rents downtown – price of rents attracts new business
- Building bridges between 3 economic generators
- Merchants have a voice
- DTSC in Industrial Park
- Higher rent, higher occupancy – better infrastructure

Section 2 – Assessment Findings

- Views of the waterfront are an asset, should take better advantage of it
- Coastal Conservancy Master Plan
- Majestic Theater – explore asset that could be better used
 - Majestic Theater Corporation is 501 (c) (3) – Larry Whitney
- Specific ways businesses are/can be collaborating between the 3 economic generators – downtown, Arsenal and Benicia Industrial Park
- Need a map to help tie everything together (this would help residents better understand what is available)
- Revenue from Industrial Park not sufficiently considered in budget. Need to continue to focus on this
- Refocus on commercial centers and Industrial Park
- Working together to achieve results is important
- Who takes the lead?
- Need examples or Best Practices of similar demographics
 - Industrial Park, commercial centers, population downtown
 - Uniqueness creates opportunity
- Employees in vibrant commercial park will drive to other retail businesses

Section 3 – Business Development Action Plan

- Zoning – priority streamlined permitting
- CEQA – Environmental Review/Plan

Section 4 – Implementing the Action

- How do We Measure Success?
 - Performance Measurement Tool (add bullet 120 day launch schedule)

- BIP Infrastructure Priorities – future
- Matrix for Assessment/Action (EDB)
- Incubator
- Benchmarking/Measurement
- Technical Advisory Taskforce
- BIPA list of needs/priorities with staff help
- Website Business Directory

Final Comments

The City Council and the Economic Development Board accepted the Draft Business Development Action Plan and directed staff to move forward with implementation of the 120-day launch for priorities with the added performance measures and reporting back to Council at the end of that time.