



AGENCY: City Council
MEETING DATE: July 11, 2022
DEPARTMENT: Administration
PRESENTED BY: J. Metz & S. McCormick
EMAIL ADDRESS: smccormick@fortbragg.com

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

TITLE:

Receive Public Review Draft of City of Fort Bragg Former Georgia Pacific Mill Site Economic Diversification Report and Provide Council Input to be Included in Final Draft

ISSUE:

The City of Fort Bragg serves as the primary commercial center for Mendocino County's coastal communities. Historically, the lumber and fishing industries have driven the local economy, however these industries have been in decline for decades and in the absence of new industries filling in, tourism is now the City's primary economic driver and source of general fund revenue.

The health orders put in place to slow the transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic showed the risk depending on a tourism-based economy and transient occupancy tax (TOT) revenues. Within a few short weeks of sheltering in place, the City was forced into lay-offs, freezing open positions and placing nearly the entire staff on 50-75% furloughed status. The need to diversify the local economy became paramount.

ANALYSIS:

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Agency (EDA) invested Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to help the City of Fort Bragg develop a strategy for economic diversification from the vantage point of the former mill site. The City secured professional services of Regional Government Services (RGS) with the goal of: 1) leveraging extensive prior community planning outcomes; 2) evaluating the feasibility of potential future development in terms of contributing towards economic diversification, quality job creation, and sustainability; and 3) positioning the City for subsequent public and public-private funding to support implementation.

Over the course of 18-months, the RGS advisory team worked with City staff, the Economic Development Ad-Hoc Committee, and countless community members, stakeholders, entrepreneurs, academics and professionals to develop context for identifying and selecting three interconnected focus projects for this study:

- Marine Research Center;
- Aquaculture & Blue Economy Innovation Cluster; and
- Extension of Central Business District to create new hospitality opportunity sites.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Provide comment on Public Review Draft of City of Fort Bragg Former Georgia Pacific Mill Site Economic Diversification Feasibility Study, to be included as appendix of the final report.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

None.

FISCAL IMPACT:

EDA invested \$137,500 for this project, which covered all consultant time and significant amount of staff time. In addition, California Sea Grant invested \$10,000 in the Blue Economy Symposium. Finally, both the Visit Fort Bragg Committee and City Marketing Team utilized allocated budget funds to promote the Blue Economy Symposium & Learning Festival.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACT:

Limited. People traveled from all over the state of California to attend the Blue Economy Symposium & Learning Festival creating greenhouse gas emissions.

CONSISTENCY:

Economic Development projects contained within study align with two of Council's top priority areas: 1) Jobs/Industry; and 2) Quality of Life. Additionally, the economic development efforts of this report are consistent with numerous General Plan policies related to promoting economic prosperity in the City and in the Noyo Harbor, as well as engaging in community-based planning, such as:

Policy LU-6.2 In areas designated for industrial land uses, coastal-dependent and coastal related industrial uses shall have priority over other industrial uses on or near the shoreline.

Policy LU-7.1 Changes in Industrial Land Use. Require that any Local Coastal Program (LCP) amendments and rezoning of lands, which are, designated Timber Resources Industrial: 1) be subject to a comprehensive planning process consistent with Policy LU-7.2; and 2) be submitted to, and effectively certified by, the Coastal Commission as an LCP amendment.

Policy LU-8.2 Facilities serving the commercial fishing and recreational boating industries shall be protected and, where feasible, upgraded. Existing commercial fishing and recreational boating harbor space shall not be reduced and shall be protected unless written findings are made that present and foreseeable future demand for the facilities that could be accommodated on the property is already adequately provided for in the area. Proposed recreational boating facilities shall, where feasible, be designed and located in such a fashion as not to interfere with the needs of the commercial fishing industry.

Policy LU-8.4 The economic, commercial, and recreational importance of fishing activities shall be recognized and protected.

Policy LU-9.15 All aquaculture development or facilities shall be carried out in a manner that will sustain the biological productivity of coastal waters, protect human health and maintain healthy populations of all species of marine organisms for long-term commercial, recreational, scientific and educational purposes.

Policy LU-9-17 Ocean front land that is suitable for coastal dependent aquaculture shall be protected for that use, and proposals for aquaculture facilities located on those sites shall be given priority, except over other coastal dependent developments or uses.

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES

Staff will work on incorporating comments received on the Public Draft Review into an appendix, and finalize report immediately following.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. City of Fort Bragg Former Georgia Pacific Mill Site Economic Diversification Feasibility Study (Draft Public Review)

NOTIFICATION:

1. City of Fort Bragg Notify Me subscriber lists: Blue Economy; Economic Development Planning; Fort Bragg Downtown Businesses; Mill Site Reuse; Tourism & Marketing
2. Noyo Ocean Collective: Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians; Noyo Harbor District; Mendocino College; Noyo Center for Marine Science; and West Business Development Center