



CITY OF FORT BRAGG

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES PLAN

AUGUST 2025

DISCLAIMER

The analyses, projections, assumptions, rates of return, and any examples presented herein are for illustrative purposes and are not a guarantee of actual and/or future results. Project pro forma analyses are projections only. Actual results may differ from those expressed in this analysis, as results are difficult to predict as a function of market conditions, natural disasters, pandemics, significant economic impacts, legislation and administrative actions.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Fort Bragg (“City”) retained Kosmont Companies (“Kosmont”) to assist City with Economic Development Advisory Services. Kosmont prepared an Economic Development Opportunities Plan including demographic, market and opportunity site assessment and identification of economic development tools for the City (“EDOP”). Land uses assessed include retail / entertainment, multi-family residential, and hospitality; strategies centered on three strategic focus areas; and economic development tools include preview of special district financing such as a Community Resilience District (CRD).

Kosmont prepared the EDOP using a variety of resources such as ESRI Business Analyst, CoStar, Placer.ai, and Crexi, which are sourced throughout.

The following is an overview of Kosmont’s scope of work:

1. Project Kickoff & Meeting Coordination
2. Real Estate & Market / Trends Analysis
3. Opportunity Site Assessment
4. Economic Development Tools

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CITY OF FORT BRAGG – EDOP

BACKGROUND

- The City is located in Mendocino County along California's scenic North Coast and is a small coastal community with a population of around ~6,800. The population has seen a slight decline since 2020 (6,941) but has generally maintained a population size of ~6,800 since 2000.
- Originally established as a military garrison in the 19th century, Fort Bragg developed into a logging and fishing hub. The City is popular for its coastline views, beaches like the popular Glass Beach, and redwood forests nearby. Fort Bragg's coastal location and cooler climate make it a popular destination for tourists during the summer.
- Over the past two decades, Fort Bragg has undergone economic transition with the closure of the Georgia-Pacific lumber mill in 2002, which marked the decline of the timber-based economy. In its place, tourism, healthcare, cannabis, and small-scale retail have emerged as economic drivers.
- The City attracts visitors driven by the Skunk Train, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, and a historic downtown district, and primarily sees its peak season from June to September.
- Healthcare services have expanded to meet the needs of an aging population, and the City has supported the regulated cannabis industry to stimulate economic activity and generate tax revenues.



BACKGROUND (CONT'D)

- Fort Bragg faces both opportunities and challenges as it looks toward the future. The 400-acre former Mill Site is a focal point for long-term redevelopment, offering potential for blue economy and mixed-use projects, open space, and economic revitalization—though environmental cleanup remains a hurdle.
- Affordable housing and water security are also ongoing concerns, prompting infrastructure investments and research initiatives like the Oneka Seawater Desalination Buoy Pilot Study.
- Fort Bragg continues to position itself as a resilient, sustainability-focused community, leveraging its natural assets, small-town feel, and commitment to economic diversification.
- Given the City's recent decline in population and limited year-round tourism, the City has three (3) primary options as it seeks to chart a path forward toward economic growth:
 1. Attract retirement communities at diverse income levels that are drawn to the coastal and outdoor lifestyle with higher-end retail and entertainment offerings;
 2. Attract more tourists throughout the year with the inclusion of new retail / entertainment / attraction offerings that appeal to broader trade area beyond the current 250-mile capture range; and/or
 3. Attract young professionals through a comprehensive strategy of promoting innovative industries and employment options with low cost of living, and remote work all within a beautiful location.
- Kosmont provides preliminary economic development strategic focus areas for the City's consideration that addresses the above options aimed at capitalizing on existing assets, marketing the City's growth potential, and cultivating redevelopment of opportunity sites.



COMMUNITY ASSETS



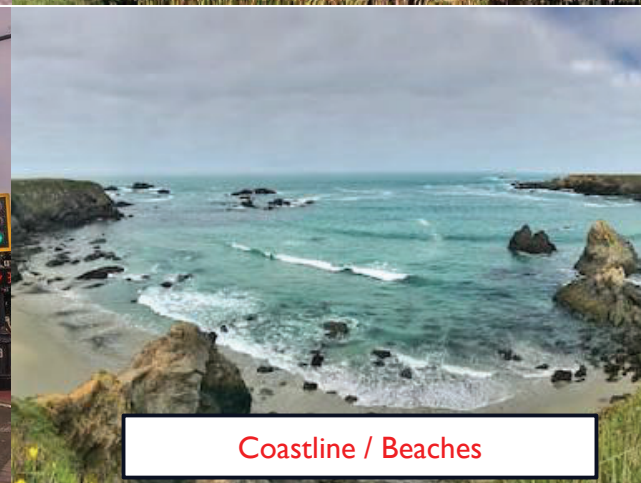
Skunk Train / Tourism



Botanical Gardens



Historic Downtown



Coastline / Beaches

FORT BRAGG AREA MAP AND DRIVE TIMES TO NEARBY CITIES



RESIDENT DEMOGRAPHIC FUNDAMENTALS

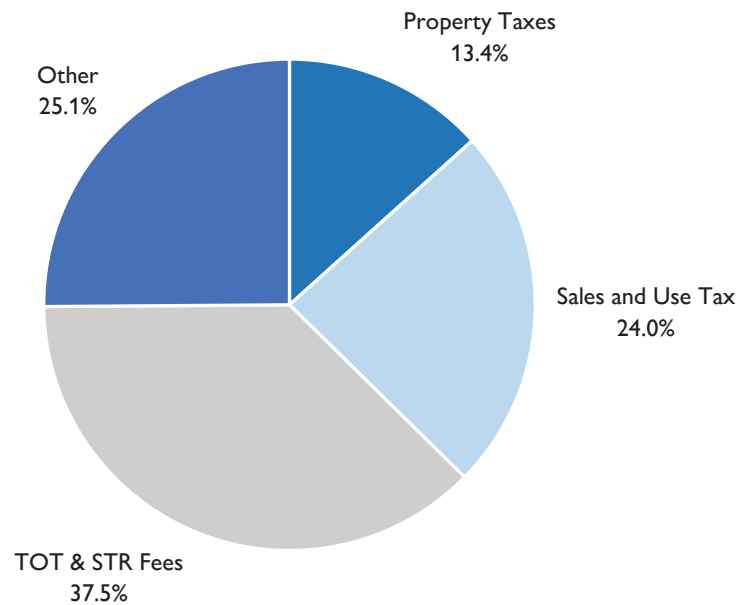
- Fort Bragg has a population of ~6,800, with population slightly decreasing by 4% since 2020 (6,941); The City saw a height of 7,010 population in 2022 but has decreased slightly since then.
- **Average Household Size** is 2.2 persons, the **Median Age** is 44.3 years, and, with ~16% achieved at least a Bachelor's degree or higher.
- City **Average Household Income** is \$75,693.
- The City is mostly (52%) a homeowner population with 77.5% of homes valued over \$500,000.
- Fort Bragg sees ~2,200 people coming into the City to work with ~1,800 commuting outside for work for a Net **Outflow** of ~390 jobs, with many workers living in Fort Bragg, Cleone, Ukiah, Caspar, Mendocino, Willits, and Sacramento amongst others.
- Main industries people of coming into Fort Bragg for work include Healthcare / Social Assistance (27%), Accommodation and Food Service (17%), Retail trade (16%), Manufacturing (5%), and Construction (3%).

VISITOR DEMOGRAPHIC FUNDAMENTALS

- Placer.ai data shows the City sees its **highest daily number of out-of-market visitors (32,100) during the month of July** followed by September (20,800). The lowest point of tourism is in November at 4,700 daily visitors.
- Visitor patterns highlight the dual role Fort Bragg plays in serving both everyday needs and tourism-driven experiences. Placer.ai data shows visitors frequent **Starbucks and Cowlick's** and visit key attractions like the **Skunk Train and Botanical Gardens** the most during their stay.
- Among visitors who visit the Skunk Train and Rail Bikes:
 - **78.6% of visitors come from within 250 miles** showing its strong regional service trade area.
 - **Top booked hotels in the City** were Harbor Lite Lodge, Beachcomber Motel, Holiday Inn Express, and Surf & Sand Lodge.
 - **Average household income** is \$98,000.
 - Based on a consumer lifestyle segmentation report by Mosaic, visitors are primarily classified as **Golden Year Guardians, Blue Sky Boomers, Autumn Years, Thriving Boomers, and Family Union**, which can generally be summarized as visitors who are an older/retired population with varying income / lifestyle choices, as well as middle-income families.

FISCAL & BUDGET FUNDAMENTALS

CITY & COUNTY



City of Fort Bragg

Fort Bragg collects ~37.5% of general fund revenues from TOT & STR fees, 24% from sales and use taxes, and 13.4% from property taxes.

Taxable sales in the City grew ~10% between 2019 and 2023 to \$169.2 million, with Clothing and Food Services / Drinking Places seeing the largest overall growth at 86% and 29% in the same period, respectively.

The City is seeking to identify opportunities that can spur economic development and increase revenues.

MARKET FUNDAMENTALS

Retail	Hotel	Multifamily
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small retail market, primarily locally serving / dining during off season; tourist serving / dining during peak season • Tight retail market with a 0.5% vacancy rate • No new development activity in over 10 years • Opportunity: maximize sales volume with increase in tourist and visitor-serving uses throughout the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-size hotel market – primarily small independent properties, bed and breakfasts (950 total rooms) • Some vacant properties in need of renovation • No planned new development activity in Trade Area • Opportunity: selective redevelopment / repositioning; upgrading existing properties and rebranding aging facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tight rental market (0.9% vacancy) • Inventory is small and comprised of 455 units across 20 properties • 93 total apartment units built in the past 10 years • No planned new development activity in Trade Area • Opportunity: Adding housing units may be a strategy to increase local demand and attract new businesses

MENDOCINO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS (2021)

	Economic Development Insights Related to Mendocino County
Economic Resilience & Structural Challenges	Identifies long-standing economic vulnerabilities in Mendocino County that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These include demographic stagnation, outmigration, an aging workforce, and the decline of key industries such as timber-based manufacturing. These trends have led to a shrinking labor force and limited economic diversity, leaving the region particularly susceptible to economic shocks. Recovery efforts must be centered on creating a more diverse and resilient economic ecosystem through coordinated local action and investment.
Strategic Industry Focus & Sector Diversification	While health care and tourism are major economic drivers in the county, they are nontraded sectors and thus limited in their potential for long-term economic expansion. Manufacturing and agriculture, although historically significant, have faced sharp declines, with timber and wine grapes being the leading agricultural commodities. The cannabis sector, despite notable taxable sales, faces uncertainty due to regulatory and market challenges. Moving forward, the County must prioritize export-oriented industry diversification, exploring emerging sectors like AgTech, green energy, and viticulture to enhance sustainable growth.
Workforce Development & Education	A central recommendation is to develop robust workforce training programs. These aim to build talent pipelines that align with future job opportunities, improve adult career mobility, and address gaps in digital, financial, and technological literacy. Emphasis is placed on upskilling underrepresented and lower-income individuals, improving access to technical and vocational training, and integrating support services like childcare and transportation to ensure program completion.
Housing & Infrastructure Barriers	Housing affordability remains a significant barrier, with a substantial portion of the population being housing-burdened. The report recommends regulatory reforms, increased housing supply through alternative housing types (like ADUs and workforce housing), and improved development processes. Similarly, broadband connectivity and road conditions are cited as critical infrastructure challenges. Expanded broadband is essential for education, small business operations, and digital equity, while poor road conditions hinder agricultural exports and logistics efficiency.
Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability	Mendocino County faces escalating threats from climate change, including wildfires, droughts, and water shortages, all of which directly impact its key sectors like agriculture, tourism, and cannabis cultivation. The report urges the integration of climate resilience into all aspects of economic planning. This includes investments in fire-safe infrastructure, sustainable water management, and leveraging opportunities in the green economy to build a more adaptable and future-ready economic base.

“SOMO STRONG 2025” COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (2022)

	CEDS Insights Related to the City of Fort Bragg
Blue Economy Development	Fort Bragg is at the forefront of the region's Blue Economy initiative, which aims to diversify traditional maritime activities into sustainable ventures. Key projects include the Mendocino Coast Blue Economy Initiative, the Noyo Center Ocean Science Center, and the Seawater Intake Project. These projects focus on climate-resilient fisheries, marine research, education, aquaculture, and harbor infrastructure upgrades to foster economic growth and job creation.
Green Economy Integration	Fort Bragg is also contributing to the regional Green Economy through initiatives like the Fort Bragg Food Products Incubator, Farmers Market Building, and other community agriculture-related ventures. These projects are designed to support local food entrepreneurs, strengthen the value-added agriculture sector, and promote sustainable production practices.
Tourism & Creative Synergies	Recognizing its potential as a coastal destination, Fort Bragg is aligning with efforts to blend tourism with creative and cultural assets. Projects such as the proposed Fort Bragg Performing Arts Center, Industrial Arts Center, and Recreational Playing Fields aim to elevate the city's attractiveness to both visitors and creative professionals, enhancing local quality of life and boosting economic diversification.
Workforce & Housing Priorities	The CEDS identifies affordable housing and workforce readiness as essential to Fort Bragg's sustainable growth. The City is involved in initiatives such as the Fort Bragg Home & Community Land Trust and the Mill Site Rezoning Project, which aim to increase workforce and affordable housing stock. These are paired with workforce training and education programs to upskill residents in sectors like green energy, healthcare, and construction.
Climate Resiliency & Infrastructure Planning	Fort Bragg's economic development strategy is deeply intertwined with climate resiliency. The City is actively engaged in projects that address sea level rise, fire safety, and drought preparedness. These include the Noyo Harbor Redevelopment and participation in the Safe Communities Planning Initiative and Business Rapid Assist Program, which aim to bolster community and economic resilience against environmental disruptions.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

Using the County's economic development plan (2021) and the SOMO Strong 2025 as a framework, the City has a variety of strategies it can implement to address its challenges, capitalize on its strengths, and pursue economic development opportunities. The strategies presented herein capitalize on existing assets, aim to market the City's growth potential, and cultivate redevelopment that prepares the City for the future. The City's economic opportunities center around three (3) Economic Development Strategic Focus Areas:

BEAR	Mill Site	Blue Economy
Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention (BEAR) strategies to ensure City is supporting a business-friendly environment. These actions are designed to promote business growth, attract investment, and improve economic resilience while contributing to population and tourism growth.	Position Mill Site as a model for climate-resilient coastal development and mixed-use development. Utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF), such as Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFD) or Climate Resilience Districts (CRD) to support the long-term growth of the site and City through the funding of critical infrastructure.	Opportunity to diversify from traditional extractive industries and maximize the City's access to its largest natural resource, the Pacific Ocean. Blue Economy can expand economic activity through business incubation, education, conservation, fisheries, aquaculture, ecotourism, and research & science.

The following section identifies potential strategies for the City to consider to pursue the goal of economic development. Action Items are also identified; these Action Items are meant to summarize potential actions the City can take to pursue the strategies, and are not listed in order of importance or chronologically.

FOCUS AREA 1: BUSINESS EXPANSION, ATTRACTION, AND RETENTION (“BEAR”)

The **BEAR strategy** focuses on the City of Fort Bragg being pro-active about messaging its overall business-friendliness to the broker, developer, and retailer/tenant community. It is critical for the City to monitor its current assets while maintaining an eye toward the future. Whether it's redevelopment, new development, addressing vacancies, or attracting new tenants/retailers to the area, the City must be pro-active in advancing its overall economic development goals while other initiatives are simultaneously underway. Examples of BEAR activities include the following:

- **Property Owner Outreach** – collaborate with property owners to understand their plans for properties, challenges that they face with development, and opportunities that may align with economic development goals. Regularly contact the top Sales Tax generators / employers / suppliers.
- **Rehabilitation / Renovation** – encourage rehabilitation and/or renovation of facilities, signage or store-front facades; can include public programs such as façade improvement loans / grants, or assisting with identifying other sources of funding.
- **Marketing** – Highlight the City as a business-friendly destination with community assets, talented workforce, and success stories.
- **Outreach** – Conduct targeted outreach to developers, businesses, and brokers with opportunity site marketing collateral, correspondence, meetings / site tours, and participation at industry events (e.g., ICSC).
- **Public-Private Partnerships (P3)** – Enter into formal partnerships with property-owners that commit City resources to fund improvements (e.g., infrastructure) that will advance both the property owner's goals for development and the City's goals for economic development.

FOCUS AREA 1: BUSINESS EXPANSION, ATTRACTION, AND RETENTION (“BEAR”)

There are a wide range of business and economic development incentive programs utilized by communities across the State. The City can create such a program, but first it is important to set specific goals (e.g. assist small business, expand job creation, attract major tax generator, attract specific type of development) and create a system to measure the success of each initiative.

Cost and method of implementing these program can vary, including job credits, façade improvements for local businesses and infrastructure development/repair, which are typically out of pocket costs. While tax sharing agreements and fee waivers can be utilized to catalyze development and are typically offset by new development tax revenues. It will be imperative for the City to maintain a pro-active partnership with the local business community (i.e., Chamber, union, trades, corporate, mom-and-pop, etc.) to ensure needs are understood and the City is able to facilitate direction of funds, remedies, or incentives to the business partner.

Examples of incentives include:

- Façade improvement program
- Infrastructure investment
- Tax sharing agreements / tax abatements
- Efficient permitting
- Job tax credits / Workforce training
- Fee waivers / deferrals in targeted areas

FOCUS AREA 1: BUSINESS EXPANSION, ATTRACTION, AND RETENTION (“BEAR”)

Action Items:

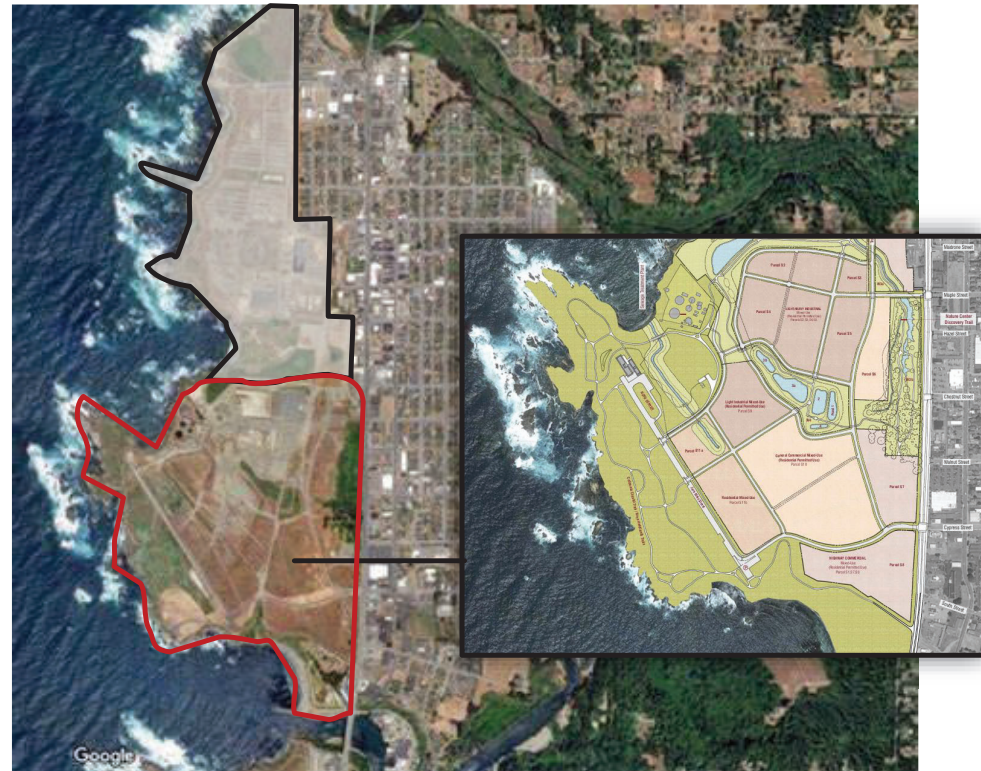
- Regularly engage with key property and business owners to understand redevelopment plans, vacancy challenges, and opportunities aligned with the City’s goals.
- Promote Fort Bragg as a business-friendly coastal City through targeted marketing campaigns, success stories, and site-ready property highlights.
- Conduct targeted outreach to developers, investors, brokers, and retailers/users through correspondence, site tours, and industry conference participation (e.g., ICSC Monterey; ICSC Western; ICSC Las Vegas). Prepare marketing materials such as site flyers/maps and workforce data to accelerate interest and decision-making, especially as it relates to key vacancies in the market.
- Maintain consistent contact with top employers, sales tax generators, and local suppliers to build proactive communication and collaboration.
- Launch or expand a mix of incentive programs, such as a façade improvement program with grants or low-interest loans to enhance storefronts, signage, and curb appeal, especially in high-visibility areas in the downtown.
- Assist property owners with identifying renovation funding sources and encourage upgrades to underutilized commercial properties.
- Collaborate closely with local business groups (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, unions, trades, and small business owners) to ensure programs meet real needs and deliver measurable value.
- Establish performance metrics to evaluate the success of business incentive programs in job creation, tax base growth, and vacancy reduction.

FOCUS AREA 2: FORMER GEORGIA-PACIFIC MILL OPPORTUNITY SITE

The City is currently undergoing a comprehensive planning and rezoning effort to envision the redevelopment opportunities for the former Georgia-Pacific Mill Site (“Mill Site”). Comprised of 192.5 acres of the entire Mill Site, the following preliminary illustrative plan (see map) highlights the development potential and vision for the southern portion:

- Zone for Light and Heavy Industrial
- General Commercial and Mixed-Use zoning
- Residential Mixed-Use
- Noyo Center
- Variety of open space including Nature Center

Its strategic location on the Pacific Ocean, combined with the City's commitment to forward-thinking planning efforts such as the Mill Site rezoning effort and Blue Economy initiatives, positions Fort Bragg to leverage this asset as a driver of long-term economic growth, sustainability, and community enhancement.



FOCUS AREA 2: FORMER GEORGIA-PACIFIC MILL OPPORTUNITY SITE

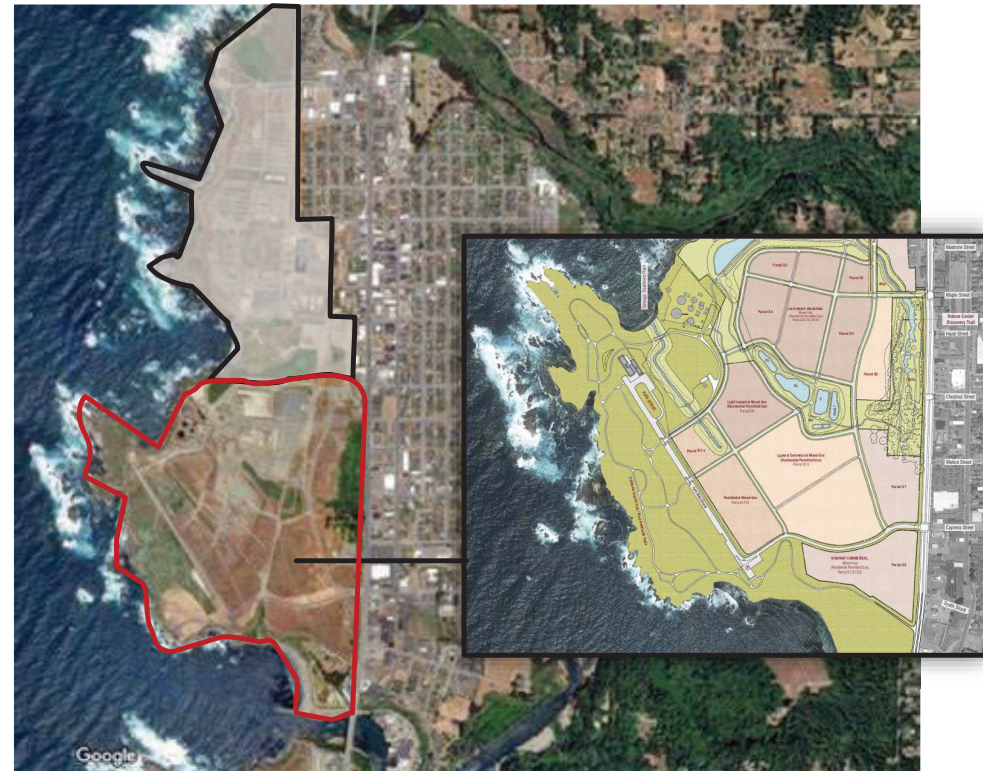
Overview of Mill Site Strategies:

Given the site's size, it offers the prospect for a transformative, mixed-use development that can attract talent and higher income individuals looking to take advantage of the City's lower cost of living and beautiful location.

With the City's demographic and market fundamentals in mind, the following are four (4) key areas/strategies for the City's consideration as it seeks to redevelop the Mill Site.

1. Tourism/Hospitality and Retail Development

- The Mill Site's scenic coastal frontage is an ideal setting for boutique hotels, eco-lodges, and tourism-driven retail and dining that can attract a broader visitor population from beyond the current 250-mile trade area.
- Additionally, with seasonal visitation among boomers and middle-income families, there's a unique opportunity to expand year-round amenities that attract a wider variety visitor income levels while improving the City's overall retail and dining offerings for its current resident population.
- As population grows, new retail / entertainment / attraction offerings may be viable, which are more likely to support the interests of year-round tourists and young professionals / skilled labor relocating to the City.



FOCUS AREA 2: FORMER GEORGIA-PACIFIC MILL OPPORTUNITY SITE

2. Mixed-Use and Residential Growth

- With only 455 total multifamily units in the area and a less-than-one-percent (>1%) vacancy rate, demand for new residential options is high and the space availability is present to support the growth. Population growth will be critical for the City's long-term success, and the influx of new residents will require additional housing options.
- Introducing mixed-use housing on the Mill Site can support local workforce retention, attract new residents, and boost overall economic activity through additional property taxes and population growth.
- Similarly, for-sale development could provide opportunities for additional home ownership among a wider demographic (e.g., young professionals, families, and retirees) that are seeking long-term residency. The City is in a position to attract a new cohort of workers in expanding industries associated with the Blue Economy that will grow the City's overall population and thereby also improving business expansion and attraction efforts of popular retailers/businesses.

3. Innovation and Sustainability Leadership

- The City can establish the Mill Site as a model for climate-resilient coastal development, incorporating features like the Noyo Center for Ocean Science, sustainable food/fishery production, and open space for public use. The site can also serve as a hub for eco-industrial and marine research initiatives, reinforcing Fort Bragg's role in California's Blue and Green Economy.

4. Local Partnerships and Economic Inclusion

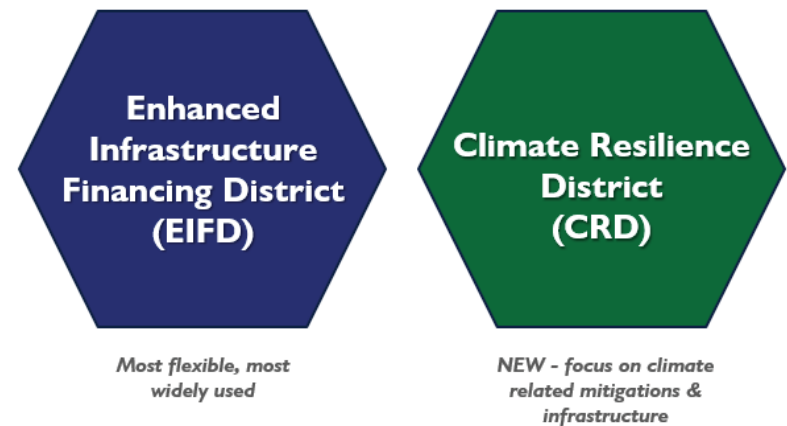
- By collaborating with organizations such as potentially the Fort Bragg Home & Community Land Trust in the future. The City can integrate affordable housing and job training programs into the development plan. These efforts will foster local inclusion, address housing needs, and enhance community well-being.

FOCUS AREA 2: FORMER GEORGIA-PACIFIC MILL OPPORTUNITY SITE

As evidenced by its investment of \$10.3 million in Build Back America Funds toward the development of broadband, the City understands the need for critical infrastructure improvements and modernization to support the growing need for distance learning, remote work, and business operations.

Similarly, other critical infrastructure will be required to support the variety of initiatives led by the City, including development of the Mill Site. Thus, the City should consider assessing the benefit of creating a Tax Increment Financing District (TIF). Two (2) specific TIF districts available in the state of California that could benefit the City of Fort Bragg includes, Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs) and Climate Resilience Districts (CRDs).

The creation of EIFDs and CRDs could be useful tool in supporting Fort Bragg's Blue Economy initiative and the Mill Site redevelopment opportunity by unlocking targeted, place-based financing to fund critical infrastructure (i.e., roads, utilities, broadband, etc.), environmental resilience, and sustainable economic development.



TIF Districts can elevate eligibility for State funding

FOCUS AREA 2: FORMER GEORGIA-PACIFIC MILL OPPORTUNITY SITE

WHAT IS A TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) DISTRICT?

TIF Fundamentals

TIF is a method of capturing increased property tax revenue from new development or property value increases within a designated area to fund public improvements or those that implement public policy, such as housing.

How it Works

As private property investment occurs, the resulting increase in property tax revenue is deposited into a separate TIF fund and used to pay for public improvements within a district.

The benefits of incorporating TIF districts include:

1. Return on Investment (“ROI”): Private sector investment induced by district commitment on a “but for” basis accelerates growth of net fiscal revenues, job creation, housing production, essential infrastructure improvements
2. Ability to attract additional funds / other public money (“OPM”) – tax increment from other entities (county, special districts), federal / state grants / loans (e.g., for TOD, water, housing, parks, remediation)

FOCUS AREA 2: FORMER GEORGIA-PACIFIC MILL OPPORTUNITY SITE

Action Items:

- **Long term:** establish the Mill Site as a “Blue Innovation Zone” that promotes a live, work, learn, and play mixed-use environment centered around the City’s Blue Economy initiatives. The Blue Innovation Zone should co-locate housing, employment / business incubation, marine research, public amenities, and retail/entertainment. Mixed-use coastal district should feature residential units, boutique hotels, retail, and dining to attract both new residents and a wider demographic of tourists to promote year-round spending.
 - **Short term:** design/plan the Mill Site as a model for climate-resilient coastal development, incorporating open space, trails, and adaptive infrastructure that promotes the City’s beautiful natural resources.
- **Long term:** utilize TIF mechanisms to capture rising property tax revenue from new development for reinvestment into public improvements that support residential and tourism growth. Invest in critical infrastructure upgrades—such as roads, utilities, and broadband—to enable residential development, support remote work, and improve visitor mobility. Prioritize infrastructure improvements around the Mill Site and harbor to unlock development capacity and connect key destinations within the City.
 - **Short term:** assess the prospect of implementing a EIFD and/or CRD to fund essential public infrastructure and climate adaptation initiatives. CRD may be integrated to ensure infrastructure projects meet long-term sustainability goals, including resistance to sea-level rise, saltwater intrusion, and extreme weather.
- Utilize local academic and professional resources from Mendocino College, artists, businesses, and non-profits to collaborate in integrating cultural, recreational, and educational assets (like nature centers and amphitheaters) that enrich the visitor experience and foster community engagement among locals.
- Prioritize affordable and for-sale housing at the Mill Site to expand long-term residency opportunities for young professionals, families, and retirees looking to relocate for new jobs and remote work.

FOCUS AREA 3: BLUE ECONOMY IMPLEMENTATION

As stated on the City's website:

"Blue Economy is a way of considering economic development and ocean health as compatible. A place where economic activity is in balance with the long-term capacity of ocean ecosystems. It's a fresh, exciting way of looking at everything from traditional marine sectors to new businesses focused on ocean resiliency, and it touches on activities related to climate change, fisheries, aquaculture, renewable energy, tourism and transportation."

Implementing the Blue Economy initiative in Fort Bragg will involve several key economic considerations that will need to be addressed to ensure sustainable growth, job creation, and long-term viability is achieved. Based on Mendocino County's economic development plan (2021), the SOMO Strong 2025 strategy, and Fort Bragg's local demographic and market conditions, here are areas for the City's consideration:

1. Economic Diversification

- City will need to promote diversification in employment (skilled labor, research, fish farming, ecotourism, educators, environmental planners, etc.) to attract a variety of labor and employment opportunities.
- Long term, City can encourage local entrepreneurs to build complementary businesses (marine equipment repair, ecotourism, seafood processing, etc.) and support through business incentive programs.

2. Capital Investment Needs

- Upgrades to harbor facilities are likely needed, including docks, seawalls, and cold storage, to support marine research, aquaculture, and sustainable fisheries.
- Seawater Intake Project may require specific capital for engineering, environmental permitting, and construction to support research and commercial activities; seeking available grant funding should be considered.
- Development or expansion of the Noyo Center for Ocean Science may require additional funding for lab space, exhibition areas, and educational/academic infrastructure.

FOCUS AREA 3: BLUE ECONOMY IMPLEMENTATION

3. Workforce Development

- There will be a need for trained workers in marine science, aquaculture, research technology, and sustainable fisheries. Programs should be established in partnership with Mendocino College and regional workforce boards.
- Investments in vocational training and partnerships with institutions like Mendocino College or marine-focused universities throughout California can help supply a qualified workforce.

4. Tourism and Education Integration

- Opportunity for creating visitor-facing components (eco-tours, aquariums, educational centers), which can drive revenue and additional public engagement opportunities for local tourism vendors.
- Fort Bragg can brand itself as a leader in marine sustainability, enhancing its identity and attracting educational tourism and conferences.

5. Public and Private Sector Collaboration

- Federal and state blue economy grants, NOAA and EDA support, and California's coastal resiliency funding streams are critical for large-scale capital projects.
- Create incentives (e.g., tax credits, enterprise zones) to attract private capital into aquaculture, ocean tech, and marine biotech ventures.

FOCUS AREA 3: BLUE ECONOMY IMPLEMENTATION

6. Environmental and Regulatory Compliance

- Projects must undergo environmental impact assessments and meet state and federal regulations. Delays and added costs for public and private partners should be anticipated and budgeted.
- Economic strategies should consider the integration of circular economy models, reduce marine pollution, and emphasize climate-resilient design to qualify for green financing and public support.

7. Long-Term Operational Sustainability

- Projects like the Noyo Center must have sustainable operating models — including grants, ticket sales, research partnerships, and rental revenue.
- Budgeting for long-term maintenance and ensuring facilities are resilient to sea-level rise, saltwater corrosion, and extreme weather is essential.

FOCUS AREA 3: BLUE ECONOMY IMPLEMENTATION

CASE STUDY OF COASTAL TOWN ATTRACTING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Eastport, Maine

Eastport, the easternmost city in the continental U.S., is a small coastal community of around 1,300 residents (2025) with a historic core and renewed energy rooted in cultural and industrial adaptation.

Key Attractors & Transformation:

Economic Revival: In recent years, Eastport's population has risen by ~15%, unemployment has declined, and property values have increased. This resurgence has been fueled by adaptive reuse of historic buildings into modern apartments— attracting both young professionals and retirees.

Heritage & Creative Reinvestment: The historic Water Street district offer both identity and authenticity.

Entrepreneurship in Marine Trades: Young entrepreneurs have founded marine-oriented enterprises—boatbuilding, repair, and aquaculture—often working in city-supplied spaces and rooted in local mentorship systems.

Lifestyle Appeal: Eastport's remote, serene environment attracts individuals seeking a change from urban life.

Impact on Young Professionals:

The availability of affordable housing (via repurposed buildings), combined with opportunities in niche enterprises (boatcraft, aquaculture), makes it appealing to young, mission-driven individuals.



FOCUS AREA 3: BLUE ECONOMY IMPLEMENTATION

Action Items:

- Market Fort Bragg nationally as a Blue Economy hub to attract grants, corporate investment, businesses, research institutions, and the respective skilled labor / young professionals that will support sustainable population growth.
- Advance other pilot projects, like the Oneka Seawater Desalination Buoy Pilot Study, to support marine science, aquaculture, and climate research activities that generate jobs and attract funding.
- Support local business incubation in ocean-related sectors, including marine biotech, seafood processing, and eco-recreation services to provide opportunities for existing business owners and entrepreneurs.
- Promote marine-based job training programs through partnerships with Mendocino College and marine universities in the state and nationally to build a local workforce skilled in ocean tech, aquaculture, and ecotourism.
- Develop visitor-facing Blue Economy attractions like aquariums, eco-tours, and interpretive centers to boost year-round tourism. Expand the Noyo Center for Ocean Science to serve as a premier research, education, and tourism destination, featuring labs, exhibits, and public programming.

NEXT / FUTURE STEPS

Economic Development Implementation & Strategies (Work Plan for Ongoing Economic Development Advisory Services):

- Business Expansion, Attraction, and Retention ("BEAR") implementation strategies related to filling key vacancies, ongoing business retention, development of opportunity sites, incentive programs, and the promotion of public-private partnerships (P3).
- Assessment of tax-increment financing district opportunities, such as Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFD) and Climate Resilience Districts (CRD) in light of proposed development opportunities within the City.
- Leverage strength of Blue Economy for future marketing campaigns (e.g., seek corporate investment, academic and research partners, and startup company interest).