



AGENCY: City Council
MEETING DATE: July 14, 2014
DEPARTMENT: Community Devel.
PRESENTED BY: M. Jones/J. Owen

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

TITLE:

RECEIVE REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND PROVIDE DIRECTION TO STAFF REGARDING ADOPTION OF BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BRE) PROGRAM

ISSUE:

The Fort Bragg City Council approved the 2014-2019 Economic Development Strategy on April 28, 2014. The Strategy identifies various actions related to business retention and expansion. This agenda item is intended to obtain Council input regarding adoption of a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program and to provide an update on other implementation efforts associated with the recently adopted Economic Development Strategy.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Provide direction regarding the proposed Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

No alternatives are needed.

ANALYSIS:

Business Retention and Expansion Program

The Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program concept was brought to the Community Development Committee (CDC) in May of 2014 and is coming forward to the entire Council for further consideration and input.

The Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program provides specific steps for implementing Council's business retention and expansion goals. Formal adoption of the BRE Program will underscore and promote City Council's message that local businesses are appreciated and supported by the City. The BRE Program builds on business expansion and retention tasks included in the 2014-2019 Economic Development Strategy. The draft BRE Program, below, incorporates CDC's recommendations.

The draft Fort Bragg BRE Program contains four major elements, with specific goals and strategies listed for each. The four components and the primary elements of each are summarized below. The entire BRE Program is included as Attachment 1.

Part 1. This section provides a statement regarding formal adoption and publication by City Council and lists the major Program elements.

Part 2. Customer Service Focus

- The goal of Customer Service is to continue to provide exceptional customer service at all City Departments by efficiently and expeditiously providing services and streamlining processes.
- The Business Friendly Culture in the Community Development Department (CDD) will be

formally implemented through the assignment of two Business Liaisons. One liaison (Housing & Economic Development Coordinator) will focus on new business inquiries, referrals and support; and the other liaison (Community Development Director) will facilitate and ensure a customer friendly culture with regard to new development projects and code enforcement.

- The Customer Service Culture will be strengthened through targeted City-wide staff development and education about business needs, appropriate responses, and the benefits of growing the local economy.

Part 3. Business Outreach

- The goal of Business Outreach is to: 1) promote Fort Bragg as a great place to do business; and, 2) gather information from existing businesses so staff can identify ways to better support them.
- The City’s website will promote “doing business” in Fort Bragg by providing up-to-date and useful reports, links, and information about the benefits and competitive advantage of doing business in Fort Bragg.
- The Business Liaisons will work with consultants to develop printed materials that promote the benefits of and explain the processes for doing business in Fort Bragg.
- The Business Liaisons will coordinate an outreach program to include informal business drop-ins, formal appointments, and periodic distribution of surveys and questionnaires, with visits to be conducted by City staff as well as City Councilmembers. Business Liaisons will ensure that appropriate follow-up occurs and will document long- and short-term business needs.

Part 4. Business Recognition Program

- The purpose of the Business Recognition Program is to show appreciation of and to provide exposure for City businesses.
- Recognition may include “Mayor’s Business Awards” in a broad range of categories, designation of “Business Appreciation Month,” and a reception for business honorees.

Summary of Results from Customer Satisfaction Improvement Efforts

CDD staff initiated a customer satisfaction survey in April via the on-line tool Survey Monkey. After a planning permit is approved or a building permit receives its final inspection, a link to the customer satisfaction survey is sent to the applicant. Additionally, paper copies of the survey are available at the planning counter for counter customers to fill out and confidentially put in a customer satisfaction survey box (Attachment 2). The results of the survey are summarized below.

1. Please rate your level of satisfaction with:	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat disappointed	Very disappointed
Staff courtesy	100%			
How well staff explained the process to you	100%			
How well staff explained technical or policy issues relevant to your project	90%	10%		
How long the process took	100%			
The final outcome for your application	100%			
City fees for the review	80%	20%		
The City’s zoning regulations as they relate to your project	80%	20%		

2. Who assisted you with your application?

- Marie Jones 70.00%
- Teresa Spade 70.00%
- June Lemos 60.00%
- Tom Varga 10.00%

3. Please provide any other comments or suggestions for the Community Development Department that you think would improve service:

- The City Permit Process was quick with no issues however, the county is another story. I hope I will NEVER again have to deal with the folks in the county office at Fort Bragg.
- I am not sure why our Final was sitting so long on someone's desk, but it all got sorted quickly once I became aware of it.
- Employees were great. The zoning policies in place are somewhat difficult to work with.
- Working with Marie during the process was great. She is very knowledgeable and one of the best if not the best that I have ever worked with. She knows her stuff and is committed to the success of the project. She deserves a lot of credit for the success in getting the project through a very difficult process.
- Kudos to Marie Jones.
- Really nice people.
- Great people.
- Need to assert local priorities over CA Coastal Commission dogma.

4. Type of application, check all that apply.

Building Permit	85.71%
Sign Permit	42.86%
Business License Approval	0.00%
Use Permit	14.29%
Minor Use Permit	14.29%
Coastal Development Permit	42.86%
Environmental Document (CEQA)	14.29%
Design Review	28.57%
Subdivision/Lot Line Adjustment	0.00%

Staff will continue to implement the Customer Satisfaction Survey program and will provide updates to the CDC and the City Council on an ongoing basis.

Brief Summary of Other Economic Development Strategy Implementation Activities that are In-Progress

1. Short-Term, Low-Cost Business License/Sign Permit Application

On June 10, 2014, the CDC received a report and discussed a process to implement a short-term low-cost business license and sign permit for start-up businesses. This would help implement a tactic from the 2014-2019 Economic Development Strategy to “make the business permitting/licensing process easier to navigate and provide a personal touch.” As conceived, the Start-Up Business License and Sign Permit would allow a prospective business owner an opportunity to “test drive” their business concept with a reduced business license and sign permit fee and short application form. At the end of the six-month period, the business owner would need to apply for and obtain a regular business license for the remainder of the year, although the six-

month license fee would be subtracted from the regular license fee for the business. Implementation of this activity would require preparation of an amendment to Fort Bragg Municipal Code Chapter 5.04, review by the City Attorney, codification of the revised ordinance by the City Clerk, adoption of a fee, and establishment of a tracking mechanism in the business license module in Springbrook. Staff is uncertain whether the demand for this “start-up” incentive is sufficient to merit the costs of implementation effort.

2. Move the Business License Application Process.

The CDC discussed the benefits of moving the first step in the business license application process from the Finance Department to the CDD. This would eliminate one step for applicants, as they could pick up the application and receive their zoning clearance for the proposed business in one step. It would also give CDD staff an opportunity to:

- Explain any zoning or permit requirements during their first visit to City Hall;
- Help the applicant apply for a sign permit;
- Apprise the applicant of the Start-Up Business License alternative; and
- Refer the business to CDD’s Economic Development Coordinator who can help the business with referrals to other agencies, etc.

This is an administrative procedure that can be readily implemented by CDD and Finance.

3. Accept Payments at the Community Development Department Counter

City staff has been looking into the possibility of enabling the CDD to accept non-cash payments for CDD fees, including: building permit, planning permit, and sign permit fees. Currently, customers must wait in line to be served at the CDD counter, then go to the Finance Department to pay their fee, and then come back to the CDD counter to provide a receipt of proof of payment. If the Finance Department is busy due to water shutoffs or water billing activities, the wait can be substantial. To accept payments at the CDD counter, internal controls and procedures would need to be established, and a locking cash drawer, receipt printer, and Springbrook set-up would be needed. The capital outlay would be under \$1,000. All cash payments would continue to be received at the Finance Department.

4. Administrative Design Review Process for Public Art

On May 27, 2014, City Council received a report and provided direction to staff regarding establishment of an Administrative Design Review process for art (murals, barn quilts, three-dimensional art) on private property in commercial districts that is visible from the public right of way. Staff has developed an Administrative Design Review Application and Process and will be seeking input from the City Attorney’s office as to whether implementation will require an amendment to the Coastal and Inland Land Use & Development Codes.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Implementation of specific Economic Development Strategies is intended to increase business expansion and retention in the City, which will improve business conditions and in turn, increase tax and other revenues for both businesses and the City. The BRE Program will be largely implemented with existing staff and resources except that increased budgets may be required for printed business marketing and recognition materials.

The customer satisfaction survey was developed and printed by staff and marginal cost is nominal.

The short-term business license/sign permit could result in decreased revenues initially but if effective, the outcome could be increased business opportunities for nascent businesses and reduction in failed start-ups.

The Administrative Design Review process for Public Art would streamline processes and if effective, would result in short-term increases in staff design review time but costs would be offset in the long-term if the stream-lined process results in more public art and City beautification that attracts additional visitors.

CONSISTENCY:

The four specific tactics discussed above implement strategies approved by City Council in the 2014 Economic Development (ED) Strategy. The BRE Program implements Strategy 1.1, sub-goals 1.1.1 and 1.1.2; Strategy 1.2, sub-goals 1.2.1, 1.2.3, and 1.2.4; and Strategy 1.8. The customer service program implements Strategy 1.1. The short-term business license/sign permit application as well as the Customer Satisfaction Survey are included in ED Strategy 1.1.1. The Administrative Design Review Process for Public Art is associated with ED Strategy 1.5.7 and ED Strategy 3.3.3.

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:

Business Retention and Expansion Program. If the City Council supports the BRE Program, it will return to City Council for formal adoption by resolution. Once adopted, the BRE Program would be posted, possibly in a more condensed version, on the City website and referenced in City business promotion materials.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program
2. Customer Satisfaction Survey

NOTIFICATION:

1. Paul Clark
2. Amy Wynn
3. Susan Winding
4. Promotion Committee

City Clerk's Office Use Only

Agency Action	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Denied	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved as Amended
Resolution No.:	_____	Ordinance No.:	_____
Moved by:	_____	Seconded by:	_____
Vote:	_____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred/Continued to meeting of:	_____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Referred to:	_____		