

Five Year Implementation Plan

Fall Workshop Synopsis

Economic Vitality

There were three main themes which stood out as representing the majority of interest related to the topic of Economic Vitality at the community workshops. The top issue raised was job training and job creation. Emphasis was placed on exploring opportunities for educational and training partnerships within the community, as well as opportunities for generating quality jobs in such areas as green manufacturing, medical fields, and the high tech industry. Next was interest associated with supporting small businesses in such areas as façade improvements, grants or loans for business start-up opportunities, and focusing on upgrades or expansion for existing commercial sites and buildings. The third main interest was seeing development proceed at key underutilized commercial sites like East Cliff Village and the commercial area at 17th & Capitola Road, among others.

While not a direct result of the economic vitality discussions, workshops on the topics of affordable housing and safe walking and biking included references to economic vitality. Preference for having business and services near residential areas to allow for access by walking and biking was mentioned. As well there seemed to be broad support from the housing discussions for ideas such as: more mixed use development; support for local business owners and programs; and continuing infrastructure improvements which create a vital network for access to local businesses.

At the final economic vitality workshop with business and commercial property owners, the primary issue focused on the difficulties and costs associated with the County permit process. Concerns were expressed with regard to the cost and risks associated with new development, emphasizing the difficulties and obstacles businesses and property owners face with government regulation. At the same time there was clear interest in Redevelopment assistance with land use planning for pursuing planning for key opportunity sites, incentives to attract private investment, and developing an economic plan or strategy that identifies goals and opportunities. It was clear that future partnerships would be welcomed to assist with small business growth and new development as well as assistance in the permit and development process.

Housing

There was a broad expression of support to continue RDA efforts and ongoing affordable housing programs. Generally, people felt that ownership and rental support programs such as the 1st Time Homebuyer program, and addressing special needs population groups such as seniors, students and low income and special needs residents were a priority.

A considerable discussion focused, as well, on exploring opportunities for smaller units, second units, and mixed use development. However there was not a lot of support for high-rise or more dense residential development. Clearly there was strong support for addressing the problems and issues of those living in mobile homes and mobile home parks. Interest was also expressed for purchasing foreclosed homes and/or assisting homeowners avoid foreclosure, and upgrading existing residences and development, rather than starting from scratch and building all new development.

Youth Activities/ Community Facilities

In the area of youth activities, there was clear support for collaborative efforts focused on the need for a teen center and/or a Boys & Girls Club facility. There were many comments related to the importance of finding ways to partner with the schools, County Parks Department and the Boy's & Girl's Club organization to achieve a well thought out and coordinated approach to providing facilities for youth activities and mentoring programs.

There were assorted ideas for other parks and recreational features such as more community gardens, skate facilities and neighborhood park development. There seemed to be somewhat mixed responses to the idea of expanding year-round use of sports fields with the installation of artificial turf. At the same time, support was expressed for sustainable, water conserving and energy conserving parks and community facilities.

Public Safety

The ideas related to public safety primarily focused on three major efforts: the provision of a county Sheriff's Facility in the Live Oak area, assistance with the relocation of the Soquel Village Fire Station, and the provision of a community medical clinic with services for low income and senior members of the community. The question of the location for a proposed Sheriff's Facility received mixed responses with a slightly larger consensus favoring access to Highway One over a more centralized facility.

Safe Walking & Bicycling Routes

This focus area brought out many comments in support for continuing with public improvements to roads, sidewalks and bike lanes. Generally, it appears that the current approach has been on the right track with efforts being directed toward major streets serving community facilities such as parks, commercial areas, and schools. In addition there was interest in RDA working with other agencies to support their efforts for the bike trail through Arana Gulch, the purchase and development of the "rail trail", and the pedestrian bridge proposed for crossing Highway One at Chanticleer Avenue.

General Comments

In addition to the focus area comments, there were other issues and goals which continued to be identified as being important to be considered in the next Five Year Plan. These were:

1. Look for partnerships and cooperative efforts wherever possible in order to conserve resources and take advantage of existing programs and facilities.
2. Be sure that all new development and construction is being done in a responsible manner with regard to energy and environmental concerns.
3. Carefully analyze the scale and scope of any proposed projects such that RDA funds are spent in a manner that provides value and primarily benefits the members of the Live Oak and Soquel communities. Also, seek out opportunities to leverage and stretch local dollars by finding matching funds and other programs to provide the greatest value to the community.
4. RDA has done a good job both with Capital Projects and Affordable Housing programs and these should continue to be part of ongoing work included in the Redevelopment Five Year Plan.
5. Wherever possible look at re-using and upgrading existing facilities rather than tearing down and starting new development.