



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

*Growing Business in the  
Urban Village by the Bay*



## BACKGROUND

The City of Albany formed an Economic Development Committee (EDC) in 2015. The EDC's work plan identified the creation of an Economic Development Strategic Plan as a major objective. A consultant team was retained in January 2017 to complete an Economic Development Strategic Plan (Attachment 1).

The Economic Development Strategic Plan project scope of work included an assessment incorporating background data review, business sector and consumer analysis, stakeholder input gathering including interviews, focus groups, an online public survey, and a public workshop, resulting in a strategic plan document with a five-year horizon. The Economic Development Strategic Plan was adopted by the City Council in September 2017.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation plan outlines the goals and actions identified in the Economic Development Strategic Plan. A table has been included that includes each goal/action, assigns the lead that is responsible for implementation, generally a City department, and/or the City's EDC in coordination with City staff, and includes a column to identify the current status towards achieving the goal. In addition, a metric column is included to help measure effectiveness. It is anticipated that the status column and metric column will be regularly updated as progress is made towards implementation.

Implementation status will be reported to the EDC on a regular basis to identify progress made towards furthering economic development within the City. In addition, a status report regarding implementation will be presented to the Council on an annual basis.

The Economic Development Plan is a voluntary, advisory document intended to broadly address policies related to encourage businesses and refine existing City procedures. The City's General Plan is a State mandated document which addresses land use planning and related policy issues over a 20 year horizon. Where there may be conflict between documents, the General Plan will supersede the Economic Development Plan as it is a guiding policy document.

## SUMMARY OF GOALS

Goal	Timeframe	Cost
1. Partner with businesses and residents	Short	Low
2. Improve City Hall’s proactive economic development efforts	Short-Mid	Medium
3. Target retail/restaurant for business attraction	Mid	Low-Medium
4. Get more infill development	Long	Medium-high
5. Upgrade built environment	Short-mid	Medium-high
6. Improve customer service and permit process	Short-mid	Low
<p><i>Short term: Underway within one year, if not immediately.</i></p> <p><i>Mid term: Underway within two years, if not sooner.</i></p> <p><i>Long term: Underway within three to five years, if not sooner.</i></p>		
<p><i>Low cost: Estimated to be less than \$20,000 annually.</i></p> <p><i>Medium cost: Estimated between \$20,000-\$200,000 annually and/or one-time, depending on the specific action.</i></p> <p><i>High cost: Estimated to be more than \$200,000 one-time.</i></p>		

The timeframe refers to the horizon for getting an effort up and running, starting to come to fruition. Once underway, they are all intended to be ongoing efforts for the life of the plan, which is five years.

### **Implementation Table Legend – “Lead Staff”:**

ADMIN: City Administration Department  
 CD: City Community Development Department  
 FIN: City Finance Department  
 REC: City Recreation & Community Services Department  
 EDC: City’s Economic Development Committee  
 ARTS: City’s Arts Committee

## Goal #1. Foster local partnerships (Business Retention)

Implements or supports existing City policies: General Plan Policies LU 1.2, 1.3, 1.9, 4.2 and CSF 3.9

Constraints: Limited public funding available, business owners are busy people with limited capacity for new time commitments, City staff capacity limitation

Feasibility: Short term, low cost

This goal focuses on existing businesses and organizations, helping them connect, share resources, and grow stronger together. It encourages clusters and synergy, promotes local employment opportunities, and starts a resident education/marketing campaign that would get specific about what “shop local” means in Albany. Most of these actions are low cost and low ongoing time commitment.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	LEAD	STATUS	METRIC
<b>1.A: Offer support (such as free meeting space and advertising) for a large employers group</b>	Identify opportunities for a venue of interest to employers groups such as job fair or other venue.	<b>ADMIN/EDC</b>	Discuss venue ideas with EDC	Identify and support one event/program in 2018
<b>1.B: Convene initial meetings of like businesses, and encourage them to continue meeting and communicating</b>	Help facilitate clusters of small businesses (i.e. home improvement/construction, restaurants, independent retail, salons, and home-based businesses.	<b>ADMIN /EDC</b>	EDC has formed a subcommittee to discuss possible clusters and ways to encourage with EDC, identify opportunities with EBEDA	Possible coordination with Chamber of Commerce/SAA  Identify one key business segment and pilot an outreach effort to that group to survey issues/topics of interest and then host a meeting to begin a conversation on how the City can support the business segment.

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<p><b>1.C: Build on the popularity of Albany Local Week</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase ways for businesses to participate (especially Dinner with Albany)</li> <li>• Establish other smaller events throughout the year, monthly/seasonally/quarterly on a consistent basis.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities to coordinate with the Arts Committee</li> </ul>	<p><b>REC</b></p> <p><b>ADMIN/EDC</b></p> <p>See 5.D</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>EDC subcommittee to identify possible events and partners</p>	<p>Local week held annually</p> <p>Coordinate with Arts subcommittee to identify opportunities during 2018 (overlaps with 5.D).</p>
<p><b>1.D: Initiate a marketing campaign targeting residents</b></p>	<p>Raise awareness of the importance of shopping locally, gassing up locally, and eating out in town. Seek opportunities to coordinate on promotions with other agencies.</p>	<p><b>ADMIN/EDC</b></p>	<p>Select primary marketing tool &amp; theme for an initial focus to build upon in future. <i>(Initiate marketing plan in 2018)</i></p>	<p>Promoted “School Care” business partnership program and Albany Education Foundation business partnership via City’s eNews.</p> <p>Work with business groups to create a unique branding campaign and use social media, free resources such as Nextdoor, City eNews and others to promote message/campaign. Message should capture Albany’s unique business community and differentiate from other existing brands.</p>

## Goal #2: Improve City Hall’s proactive efforts to support business growth (Business Retention and Attraction)

Implements or supports existing City policies: City Council 2017-19 Strategic Plan Objective 5.2

Constraints: Limited public funding available, City staff capacity limitation

Feasibility: Short or mid term, low to medium cost

This goal targets an increased level of focus and data-based approaches to City-driven economic development, by regularly tracking and reporting out on business indicators, like business owner satisfaction surveys, number of businesses, employee count, and website visitors. It also addresses an increased expectation and desire to help business owners become better at their jobs, through small business training.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	LEAD	STATUS	METRIC
<b>2.A: Create webpage on “How to Start a Business in Albany”</b>	Bring together all the various requirements and resources in terms accessible to laypeople, answering the questions “Why?” and “How?” to open a business in Albany. Seek examples from EBEDA.	<b>ADMIN</b>	Inquiry to EBEDA to identify model template. Draft page in progress.	Webpage developed by December 2017.  Promote webpage after development.
<b>Action 2.B: Promote small business training</b>	The SBDC or other provider can work with the City and EDC, in cooperation with the Chamber and SAA, to develop educational workshops for retailers and restaurants (i.e. social media/ marketing, displays, customer service, etc.)	<b>EDC</b>	EDC subcommittee created to identify workshop topics and possible speakers (successful local businesses, local business agencies, etc.)	Schedule presentation for the EDC by the East Bay EDA to discuss concept further.  Conduct a training in 2018.

<p><b>Action 2.C: Conduct a biannual business survey</b></p>	<p>Check in with business owners every other year to evaluate existing efforts related to business attraction, retention, and permit/customer service issues, and discover new ideas for supporting local business growth.</p> <p>Conduct focused surveys with particular business sectors as an optional task.</p>	<p><b>ADMIN/EDC</b></p>	<p>Draft survey to be reviewed with the EDC prior to sending out to business community. <i>(March 2018).</i></p>	<p>Survey will be sent out in 2018. Work to achieve 75% of survived businesses who use/interact with City Hall staff state they are satisfied with the level of service received.</p>
<p><b>Action 2.D: Centralize and track business indicators</b></p>	<p>Gather and report annually to EDC/City Council on key measures of business growth such as the public version of the quarterly sales tax report. It could also include employment in Albany, sales tax by sector, and number of business licenses by sector.</p>	<p><b>ADMIN/FIN</b></p>	<p>Quarterly presentation to City Council and EDC.</p>	<p>Reporting/presentation quarterly.</p>
<p><b>Action 2.E: Identify one staff position that is the first and main point of contact for economic development</b></p>	<p>This person may do it all, or may delegate into various departments. S/he will be the public face of Albany economic development, and be known to the business community. This person should have the authority to respond quickly to time-sensitive business issues, and mobilize a team of others to assist when necessary, and not be a “regulator”</p>	<p><b>ADMIN</b></p>	<p>Currently Assistant City Manager in coordination with other staff</p> <p>EDC subcommittee formed to identify options for staffing.</p>	<p>Propose staffing options for upcoming City budget cycle (June 2018)</p>

### Goal #3: Target new businesses that are retail and restaurants, or that provide a new amenity or choice (Business Attraction)

Implements or supports existing City policies: General Plan Action LU 6.E

Constraints: Building/storefront configuration not always optimal, perception of oversaturation/concerns about competition.

Feasibility: Mid term, low to medium cost

This goal optimizes the strong retail/restaurant sector, using information from the demographics of the extended market and high household incomes, to support attracting more specialty retail and food uses. It also ties back to Action 2.B, small business training. These actions run on an ongoing basis, and range from low to mid-cost, depending on available funds for Action 3.B.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	LEAD	STATUS	METRIC
<b>3.A: Communicate the targets to commercial brokers</b>	Ongoing relationships with brokers working in Albany can foster a better understanding of what will thrive in Albany, on both sides.	<b>CD</b>	Ongoing	Identify broker to meet with EDC. Generate one new lead per month, track lead to see if City interaction resulted in a new business opening in Albany.
<b>3.B: Revise City's existing façade improvement program to be: 1) targeted, and 2) more impactful</b>	Fund preparation of guidelines that detail first steps in pursuing a facade improvement project (sample facade and signage renderings, financing guide, etc.), and/or be refocus to target either Solano or San Pablo in alternating years.	<b>ADMIN</b>	Developing agreement with technical consultant to draft amendments	New façade improvement template available to businesses and promoted in 2018/19.
<b>3.C: Run targeted attraction outreach campaign</b>	Prepare a marketing package centered on the demographic reports for direct mail, personal visits, hiring a broker to represent the City, trade show attendance, advertising/public relations campaign, event sponsorship, etc.	<b>ADMIN</b>	More long-term pending accomplishments in other goals.	On-line campaign (and via existing promotion areas) in 2018/19.  Target new businesses that are retail and restaurants or that provide a new amenity or choice



#### Goal #4: More infill development (Business Attraction)

Implements or supports existing City policies: Housing Element Program 4.G, General Plan Policies LU 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.7, City Council 2017-19 Strategic Plan Action 1.2.A.3

Constraints: Public approval process can be uncertain

Feasibility: Long term, medium cost

This goal implements a major theme of the General Plan - building new infill where appropriate and preserving open space/recreational options where the community has said it is not appropriate. The Housing Element has a list of opportunity sites. High-quality infill mixed-use development can be financially sustainable for the community, help meet housing goals, and be designed beautifully and functionally from the start, to maximize the commercial potential. Even as the large mixed-use University Village nears completion, there's no "next project" on the horizon, nor is there another available opportunity site that size. Future infill will have to be small and smart.

Actions 4.A-C can all be done by staff on an ongoing basis for a relatively low cost. Action 4.D is a big cost and big staff effort.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	LEAD	STATUS	METRIC
<b>4.A: Developer/Designer Outreach and Input</b>	Invite developers and architects to an annual/biannual forum to hear about their successful practices from other communities, and promote Albany.	<b>CD/ADMIN</b>	Staff to identify appropriate venue and topic	Host one meeting in 2018/19.
<b>4.B: Opportunity Site Property Owner Outreach</b>	Annual phone or personal check-in with the owners of the development opportunity sites previously accepted as part of the approved Housing Element.	<b>CD</b>	Ongoing	Prepare an annual memo summarizing opportunity site status
<b>4.C: Zoning Code changes: Revise allowed uses in SC, SPC, and CMX zones</b>	Remove obstacles (such as the major use permit process) or uncertainty about new development in these areas, which are identified for new and intensified development by the General Plan.	<b>CD</b>	Preparing agreement with technical consultant to draft changes.	Commercial parking code changes and revisions to allowed uses to be adopted in 2018/19.

	<b>Reduce/eliminate off-street parking requirements</b> for businesses moving into existing commercial buildings on Solano and San Pablo.			New list of allowed uses to Planning Commission for review and approval in 2018.
<b>4.D:</b> Consider undertaking a <b>San Pablo Avenue Area Plan with EIR</b>	<p>To accommodate new infill with increased maximum FAR/ heights/ other adjustments to development standards in line with the General Plan. This could include <b>design guidelines</b>, meaning both form and function (accommodating retail configurations for ancillary functions, for example). Include <b>pre-approved suite of incentives</b> for new development projects that meet multiple policy goals (i.e. fee waivers, fee deferrals, tax rebates, and expedited processing. (Density bonus already offered per state law.) Promote as part of developer outreach.</p> <p>Or, prepare a targeted <b>update to the 1993 San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Concept Plan and Design Guidelines</b>. To modernize the existing plan to present a clear vision for desired new development. Consider studying the possibility of extending mixed-use zoning through the parcels to Kains &amp; Adams in certain locations.</p>	<b>CD</b>	Determine most effective and practical option for San Pablo Avenue area (design guidelines or a specific plan).	Identify process for updating design guidelines and timeline in 2018-2019.

**Goal #5: Upgrade built environment (Business Attraction)**

**Implements or supports existing City policies: Active Transportation Plan, General Plan Policy LU 3.14, 6.4, 6.5, and 6.7 and Action LU 1.B, City Council 2017-19 Strategic Plan Objective 4.2.B**

**Constraints: Public funding limited, and consensus on design can be difficult**

**Feasibility: Mid term, medium to high cost**

This goal upgrades the overall built environment in commercial areas to match the quality of the majority of businesses, setting the tone and making the areas attractive for customers. Securing more customer public parking and increasing the existing on-street time limits are part of this section, responding to business stakeholder concerns. Current street infrastructure and appearance efforts (implementation of Complete Streets on San Pablo, parklet in development on Solano, services for people experiencing homelessness, and graffiti removal) should definitely all continue even as the following actions get underway; most of these are long-term actions with significant costs associated with them. The measurable for these actions will depend on how they unfold during further policy development phases.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	LEAD	STATUS	METRIC
<b>5.A: Develop a plan for new benches and bus shelters</b>	Ensure high quality and consistent seating, shelters, street trees, news racks, bike parking, etc.	<b>ADMIN/CD</b>	<p>Planning process to begin for the “upper Solano” area east of the BART tracks in Fall 2017, including members from EDC to serve on a City task force.</p> <p>Include review of opportunities for safe and convenient bicycle access/parking.</p> <p>Currently inventorying news racks to request repair/removal as needed.</p>	<p>New amenities included in complete streets plan and bike parking incorporated.</p> <p>Bike rack parking policy in process of being drafted.</p>

<b>5.B: Require a high level of design quality for new development citywide, especially on Solano and San Pablo</b>	Revise San Pablo Avenue Design Guidelines, incorporating revised standards into a new Specific Plan, and/or strengthen administrative standards	<b>CD</b>	This will be done in conjunction with Policy 4.D.	
<b>5.C: Develop a civic signage program or implement expanded Wayfinding</b>	Establish a consistent sign program to make the commercial districts look and feel more cohesive.  Establish attractive and consistent entry signage at City borders	<b>ADMIN</b>	Program is included on an ongoing basis within Transportation grants including the Solano Avenue Complete Streets planning grant for upper Solano Avenue.	Signage designed and incorporated into Complete Streets Plan for upper Solano Avenue.
<b>5.D: Public art program</b>	Work with Arts Committee to implement public art programming.  Create subcommittee with the EDC and Arts Committee to identify opportunities.	<b>EDC/Arts</b>	Convene a subcommittee to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss sculpture loan program (placement of sculptures in commercial area)</li> <li>• Mural opportunities (how to support businesses interested in murals, partnerships with artists &amp; businesses)</li> <li>• Support for “Fall into Haiku” program (post Haikus, promote program &amp; further connectivity with businesses)</li> </ul>	Subcommittee convened in late 2017/early 2018.

<b>5.E: Off-Street Parking</b>	Negotiate a shared use parking agreement with private lot owners with excess capacity on Solano and San Pablo. Mechanics Bank (photo) and Cornell School are two options to start investigating.	<b>ADMIN</b>	Agreement with Mechanics Bank in place for public parking after bank hours.	Identify other shared parking arrangement opportunities.
<b>5.F: On-Street Parking</b>	Consider raising time limits on Solano & San Pablo to at least two hours, preferably three, where it is currently 90 minutes.	<b>ADMIN</b>	Lower priority given results of parking study indicate parking is not a major issue. Added attention will be focused on bike parking program standards.	

**Goal #6: Improve customer service, and streamline business approvals (Business Attraction and Retention)**

**Implements or supports existing City policies: City Council 2017-19 Strategic Plan Goal 5 and Objective 5.1**

**Constraints: Staff capacity**

**Feasibility: Short – mid term, low cost**

This emphasizes a customer service culture at all levels of the organization, especially at the public counters where business applicants come in for licenses and permits. The City is moving toward improvements on many fronts already, such as coordinating Counter Hours, staffed by representatives from multiple divisions involved in the permit process. This, and the improvements recommended below, can be measured by customer feedback loops, such as automated surveys after the transaction, suggestion box, or as part of a biannual business survey. All of these recommendations can be set up in a short time frame for ongoing benefit, and they are low-cost.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	LEAD	STATUS	METRIC
<b>6.A: Give more administrative weight to customer service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review existing customer service administrative procedures citywide; add to them if necessary.</li> <li>➤ Increase customer service training for front-line staff, add to evaluations for employees and supervisors managing front-line employees, and job descriptions for new hires.</li> <li>➤ Post signage about the City's customer service commitment to set clear expectations.</li> </ul>	<b>ADMIN</b>	<p>Customer Service Motto developed and in City lobby areas.</p> <p>Customer Service Survey in use on City's website, and also in City Hall lobby. Customized survey for Community Development Department underway.</p> <p>Researching opportunities for customer service trainings for staff.</p>	<p>Motto posted in City lobby areas by end of 2017.</p> <p>Pilot survey in City Hall lobby and on website by November 2017, verify whether 75% of respondents are satisfied with level of service received.</p> <p>Hold a customer service training in 2018 for City staff (particularly counter staff).</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Consider additional customer amenities.</li> <li>➤ Formalize the customer feedback loop, by implementing some version of a suggestion box (could be online), then documenting feedback and staff responses.</li> </ul>			
<b>6.B: Regularly update City handouts and website</b>	Provide information to address frequent permit questions from businesses and inexperienced applicants; include cost/time estimates, submittal requirements, and expectations. Clearly note the 1.75% art fee.	<b>CD</b>	On-going. Information continues to be updated as part of web site relaunch.	Update ongoing
<b>6.C: Business License Process Improvements</b>	Review the business license process and fee structure to reconsider the employee-based fee schedule, improve quality of data, move toward online submittals.	<b>ADMIN/FIN</b>	To be included in Operational & Organizational study of the Finance Department.	Review process in 2018, provide recommendations to Council for review.
<b>6.D: Home-based Business Approval Streamlining</b>	Reduce City review requirements for home-based businesses; consider eliminating Building/Fire sign-offs to make these business licenses over-the-counter.	<b>ADMIN/CD</b>	Staff to discuss and determine opportunities for streamlining. This is forthcoming in early 2018.	Updated approval process in 2018/19.
<b>6.E: Publicize improvements and successes</b>	Use City media to promote the City's customer service priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview satisfied business customers,</li> </ul>	<b>ADMIN</b>	Staff will seek possible business customers – currently coordinating with Albany Ford Subaru.	Interview a satisfied customer and do short promo video in 2017/18.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a step-by-step guide, “How to Open a Business in Albany”</li><li>• Promote the efforts City staff makes to help streamline the permit process such as the current practice for staff to hold no-cost pre-application meetings, and other streamlining efforts that may be incorporated in the future</li></ul>		“How to” video can be developed pending written “how to” materials (action 2.A).	Develop a “how-to” video in 2018/19.
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