

Submitted by Chamber of Commerce
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Ashland Chamber of Commerce

Economic Sustainability Committee

“Research, Education, Marketing, Consultation and Support for Business”

The mission of the Economic Sustainability Committee (ESC) is to develop and implement strategies for retention, expansion and relocation of Ashland businesses with a primary emphasis on family wage jobs.

The goals of the (ESC) are to collect data and conduct research on the Ashland economy; evaluate economic data for trends and needs analysis; conduct trainings, workshops and conferences for emerging, new and existing businesses; provide information to government of business needs; create and distribute marketing materials to encourage business retention, expansion and relocation; and to provide confidential individual and team consultations and support through the Rapid Response Team to new and existing businesses.

The ESC will function in the following ways:

The full ESC will meet quarterly and consist of private and public sector members including the Planning Director and/or City Administrator. The Mayor will assign two different City Council people each quarter to attend the meetings. Minutes will be taken and distributed to other Councilors not in attendance. Updates will be given on the progress and status of research, educational programs and marketing projects. Opportunity for comments and input will be given at each meeting. No confidentiality will be required at these meetings.

The ESC Working Group will meet monthly or more as needed and will consist of business members and the Southern Oregon University School of Business underscoring our long-standing collaboration on research and educational programs. They will provide direction, monitor programs, evaluate and conduct research, determine educational programs, workshops and conferences; create and evaluate marketing programs and projects; discuss results of confidential Rapid Response Team meetings for needed follow-up. Confidentiality will be required of the members of this working group. In addition, they will coordinate with the Business Development Committee on workshop and conference implementation.

The Rapid Response Team will meet as needed and is on-going. They meet one-on-one and as a team with new and existing businesses who need information, assistance and support to help them with retention, expansion and relocation. Staff will provide initial contact and discussion with inquiry. All meetings are strictly confidential until the business allows them to become public.

Economic Development Strategy

What is an Economic Development Strategy?

An economic development strategy for a community should be a vision for the community to mobilize leadership to create and maintain good jobs at good wages, cultivate a culture based on entrepreneurship and innovation and responds to the values of the community.

The citizens and businesses of Ashland place great pride in their community. Community values, such as conservation, creativity and innovation should be reflective of the strategies and businesses that the community desires in their economic efforts.

An economic development strategy is meant to provide the principles of what the city is working toward, and developing a coordinated response to how that might occur. By organizing and targeting efforts, the community can better utilize scarce resources, build on strengths, and put outside resources to work more effectively.

Emerging Issues

There have been conversations within the community about what the city's economic development strategy is, or whether there even is one. At the same time, there have been questions about the appropriate role of the city and others in developing, leading and implementing an economic development strategy.

The city's Community Development Department undertook an effort to meet state economic development planning goals by conducting an Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA). Three major themes emerged during the public process as foremost elements of a vision for Ashland's future economy:

- *Preservation and enhancement of the quality of life*
- *Creation of a diverse and sustainable economy*
- *Improved coordination & processes of civic and government sectors*

What would an Economic Development Strategy look like?

An economic development strategy should be a working document that identifies what the community is trying to accomplish, and who will be working on that strategy. For example, using one of the themes identified regarding a diverse and sustainable economy, a strategy might be:

Foster the creation of a local, sustainable economy by partnering with other organizations to watch for opportunities and vulnerabilities, incubate and coordinate projects and facilitate dialogue, action and education within our community.

- Identify, support and promote the production of more of our essentials in Ashland. In particular, we can create more:
 - Locally grown and packaged food
 - Energy (renewable)
- Ensure that valuable agricultural and forest lands in the region are conserved to produce food and other products for a sustainable economy.
- Support the education of youth and the community to create and maintain knowledge and skills to help create a sustainable economy.
- Engage business, government and community leaders to initiate planning and policy change.

Lead: (Identify lead entity to coordinate)

When: (Identify when it will be done)

Cost: (Identify any costs to implement)

Involve: (Identify who should be involved)

How: (Identify how it will get done)

Where do we go from here?

If the concept of an Economic Development Strategy makes sense for the city to accomplish, the City, working in concert with the Chamber and others, should develop a work plan to accomplish this effort. Public involvement and cooperation of various stakeholders is critical to the success of an Economic Development Strategy. As such one of the first tasks is to decide on the framework for working together.

The following is a conceptual task list and timeline to accomplish this effort.

1. Create an Economic Development Task Force.

Since the city does not have a standing committee that reviews and adopts economic development policies and strategies, a broad-based task force representing diverse interests would provide the balanced review and input necessary for a successful economic development strategy. Having the diverse interests will also foster a spirit of cooperation amongst parties. The Task Force could be charged with:

- Gather public and business input regarding economic development strategies for Ashland
- Draft and propose an Economic Development Strategy for the city of Ashland
- Develop an interim and long-term implementation strategy, including consideration for staffing, contracts and other recommendations

2. Determine interim staffing needs.

This effort will entail considerable effort to coordinate, as well as prepare materials for Task Force and public review. An interim staffing assignment could assist in getting the project started. The city and/or Task Force might look at supplementing the effort with consultant services or additional staffing.

3. Review existing economic development programs within the city, region and state.

One of the first tasks is to understand what has already been accomplished, who is doing what, and how well is it working? This review would include the city, Chamber, SOREDI, State of Oregon, SOU, and others.

4. Develop an economic development strategy for the City of Ashland.

This would be the heart of the effort and would have to include extensive public involvement. The Task Force, with assistance of assigned staff or consultants, will need to identify the approach to preparing the strategy. In order to be an effective project, it is important that the strategy not only identify what is going to be done, but who will be making sure it gets done and any resources necessary to carry out the strategy.

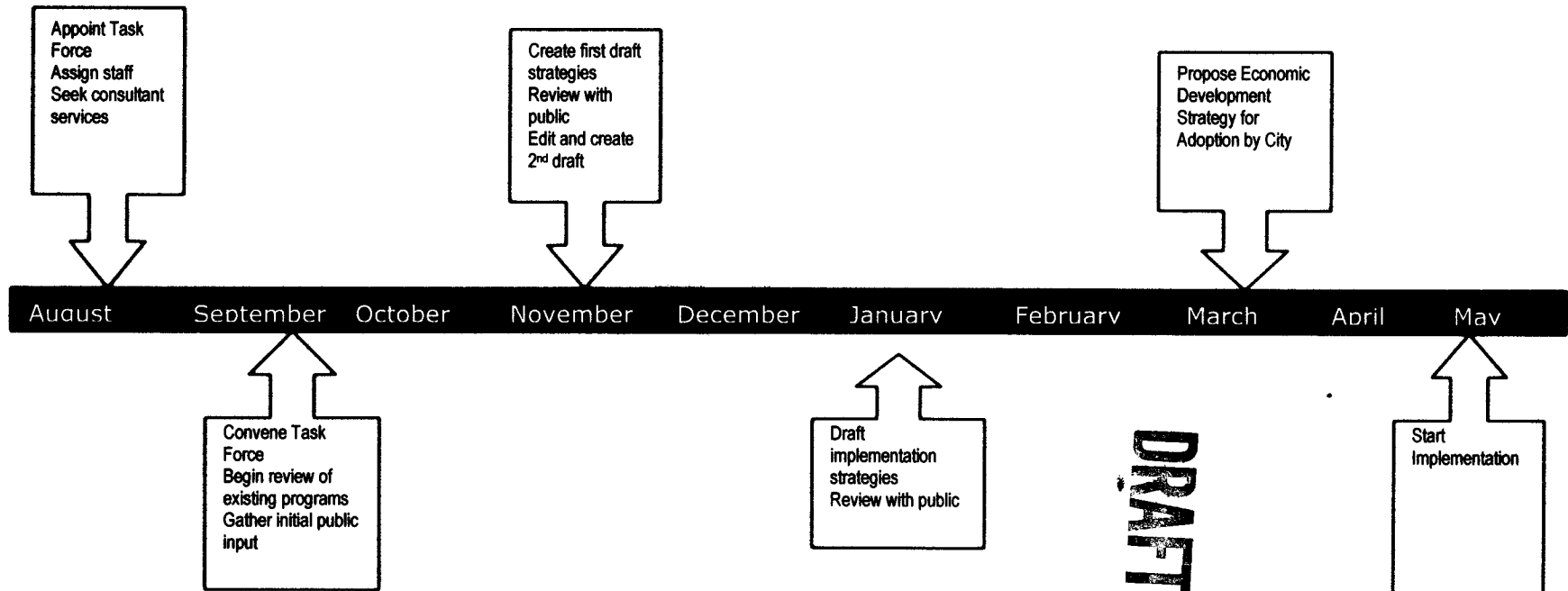
5. Implement the economic development strategy for the City of Ashland.

The effort does not end with a document that sits on a shelf. The strategies are ongoing programs and efforts. As such, it is important that some sort of implementation and monitoring effort be put in place to ensure success. This monitoring effort will also enable the city to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances.

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Ashland Economic Development Strategy

Conceptual Timeline



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Goal #3

Expand, broaden, and preserve the economic base with year-round employment and family-wage jobs

Priorities/policies/projects (2 years)

- a) Establish a City economic development commission, alternative strategies for accomplishing
- b) Identify/recommend policy for point-of-contact with City for economic development
- c) Identify opportunities for partnership to accomplish economic base expansion, etc.
- d) Include significant involvement of citizens and diverse stakeholders in “old” action item #1
i.e. produce a working economic development plan)

From February 10 Meeting:

Administration, with an ad hoc commission, will take on Economic Development Plan in this Biennium. Implementation is dependant upon recommendations and future Council decision (b, c, d under Priorities would be part of Commission’s charter.)