

City of Laguna Beach

FY 2016-2018 Economic Development Action Plan

Developed by the Economic Development/Business Assistance Subcommittee in collaboration with the Laguna Beach Chamber of Commerce and Visit Laguna Beach with the intent to implement within two years of adoption.

Adopted by the City Council on June 14, 2016

I. Goal: Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction

A. Objective: Retain existing businesses and identify impediments to establishment of new businesses that serve residents as well as visitors

Strategies:

1. In collaboration with the Laguna Beach Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), the City of Laguna Beach (City) will continue its efforts to identify regulatory constraints in addition to streamline City permitting and development processes by conducting a survey of customers. The results of the survey will be reported to the City Council with recommendations for action as appropriate. (Ongoing. Lead: Greg Pfof, Community Development Department and Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce)
2. Perceived lack of parking, current parking requirements, as well as vehicular congestion are considered a constraint by businesses, residents, and visitors. The City continues to address these issues by implementing the Parking Management Plan (PMP), expanding trolley service, evaluating actual parking demand, and searching for additional parking locations. (Ongoing. Lead: Shohreh Dupuis, Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Works)
3. The Chamber will encourage local businesses to cooperate and support each other; build synergies to encourage attraction of new businesses. (Ongoing. Lead: Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce)

B. Objective: Recognizing changing consumer habits, supporting existing businesses by identifying needs, and encourage a thriving, year-round economy

Strategies:

1. Develop and implement a Business Visitation Program. A team consisting of the Mayor (if unavailable, another Councilmember or Planning Commissioner); the City Manager (or designee); and Chamber of Commerce Executive Director (or designee) will visit a minimum of one business per month. The purpose of the program is to learn about the opportunities and challenges of the business in addition to listen to concerns. Information learned will be shared with City, Chamber, and VLB officials. City will coordinate the program and track follow-up actions. (Lead: Christa Johnson, City Manager's Office)

2. The Chamber will continue to provide networking and educational workshops to the business community to help small businesses identify emerging trends and helpful marketing strategies. The City will offer periodic use of the City Council Chambers for no fee to support this endeavor. (Lead: Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce)
3. The Chamber, in collaboration with VLB, will analyze the effectiveness of the Chamber's first "Concierge Expo", held on June 2, 2016. The purpose of the Expo is to familiarize local hotel concierge staff with Laguna Beach retail establishments. The Chamber will survey guests and exhibitors to gauge effectiveness, and will make recommendations on going forward with future annual or bi-annual Concierge Expos. (Lead: Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce)
4. The City and the Chamber will continue their partnership to provide "Open for Construction" programs to the business community by hosting educational workshops focusing on building code updates and permitting processes information. (Ongoing. Lead: Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce and Greg Pfost, Community Development Department)
5. VLB will continue to market and promote the Laguna Beach destination, which benefits local lodging and dining establishments, retailers, and arts groups. Destination marketing is concentrated online with a focus on specific target market segments, an enhanced social media strategy, and aggressive public relations efforts. (Ongoing. Lead: Ashley Johnson, Visit Laguna Beach)
6. The Chamber will encourage cooperative business marketing practices and joint marketing promotions, including a pilot program for quarterly sidewalk sales on private property. (Ongoing. Lead: Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce)
7. Continue to expand use of the VLB smart phone application. (Lead: Ashley Johnson, Visit Laguna Beach)
8. The Chamber and the City will work together to grow the Chamber's "Think Laguna First" and "Small Business Saturday" campaigns to encourage residents to shop locally. (Lead: Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce) Possible programs may include:
 - a. Explore the development of a "Locals Card" that provides discounts to local businesses
 - b. Explore the creation of a "Think Laguna First" monthly challenge that rewards residents who shop local
 - c. Explore the feasibility of holding a pop-up event on the grounds of City Hall in which local merchants can sell their goods on a rotating basis
 - d. Explore new and creative ways to promote "Think Laguna First"

C. Objective: Fill commercial vacancies in addition to identifying gaps in local retail offerings for residents and visitors

Strategies:

1. The City's Planning Commission will continue its Open for Business program five times a year and identify other opportunities to enhance Laguna Beach's reputation as a "business friendly" community. (Lead: Greg Pfof, Community Development Department)
2. The Chamber will identify/inventory all vacant, for sale, or for lease commercial properties. They will post information including contact information, square footage and other pertinent details on a centrally located database attached to the Chamber's website as well as monthly e-newsletters. The Chamber will keep the information updated. (Lead: Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce).
3. The City will continue its Key Property Contact Team comprised of City staff to meet individually with property owners of prime commercial sites to discuss the current status and the opportunities to enhance commercial activity. The Economic Development/Business Assistance Subcommittee will identify and prioritize prime commercial sites for the Key Property Contact Team. (Lead: Christa Johnson, City Manager's Office)
4. The Assistant City Manager and Assistant Community Development Department Director will continue to act as point of management contact for individuals interested in opening businesses in the City and property owners seeking to find tenants. (Lead: Christa Johnson, City Manager's Office)

II. Goal: Enhance the customer experience for residents in a way that visitors also enjoy.

A. Objective: Attract visitors and increase overnight stays while maintaining the quality of life enjoyed by residents.

Strategies:

1. VLB will conduct a comprehensive visitor study throughout 2016. Quarterly updates will be shared in April, July, and October with final program results released in April 2017. (Lead: Ashley Johnson, Visit Laguna Beach)
2. The City Manager's Office will work with representatives from the Chamber and VLB to develop special event guidelines for a trial program and present to the City Council for consideration. The special events guidelines concept was supported by the 2016 Cultural Arts Plan to include events that have a cultural dimension. The special event guidelines will provide City staff with parameters to process special event applications for use of

public property that would result in an increase in overnight stays and minimize disruptions to residents. (Lead: Christa Johnson, City Manager's Office)

3. In order to develop a wayfinding signage master plan, the City will conduct an assessment to consider size/visibility of wayfinding signage. Additionally, design and color schemes of collateral materials that compliment and is consistent with wayfinding signage will be included in the master plan. (The City Council provided funding for planning efforts regarding the wayfinding signage project in FY 16-17. The wayfinding signage master plan was supported by the 2016 Cultural Arts Plan. Staff will begin the process in July 2016.) (Lead: Greg Pfof, Community Development Department)
4. VLB will organize and facilitate a hotel owner/operator focus group to garner ideas and feedback on current City initiatives. (Lead: Ashley Johnson, Visit Laguna Beach)

B. Objective: Maintain and invest in quality infrastructure and improvements.

Strategies:

1. City staff is continuing to expand and enhance the City's public transit system including refining an off-season trolley service that began in March 2015. (Lead: Robert Sedita, Public Works Department)
2. City will continue to improve the supply of parking through the identification of satellite parking sites. Strategies identified in the Downtown PMP are being implemented and the DSP update will include various parking recommendations. (Lead: Shohreh Dupuis, Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Works)
3. The City will research feasibility of developing a program for City Council consideration that will allow first time parking violators that receive a citation an opportunity to receive an undetermined benefit as a way of "taking the sting out" of paying a parking ticket. (Lead: Robert Sedita, Public Works Department and Ryan Hallett, City Manager's Office)
4. The Chamber and the City will investigate interest in operating an employee shuttle. (Lead: Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce and Robert Sedita, Public Works Department)
5. City will continue planning and implementing improvements to the resident and visitor serving public infrastructure as resources allow. Examples include:
 - Implementing "complete streets" by making streets more attractive for use by pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit riders
 - Maintaining the sewer and storm drain infrastructure to protect the quality of the Blue Belt
 - Beautifying alleys and walkways
 - Improving Main Beach Park including new public restrooms on its south end
 - Repairing and beautifying several beach access areas and overlooks

- Acquiring additional open space
 - Completing a Transit Study
 - Addressing impacts related to occurrences of homelessness
6. Improve appearance of commercial areas through regular sidewalk cleaning. (Shohreh Dupuis, Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Works)
 7. Partner with the Laguna Beach Beautification Council to identify small-scale, low cost improvements to beautify commercial areas. (Lead: Economic Development/Business Assistance Subcommittee)
 8. Research feasibility of a Commercial Property Maintenance ordinance in addition to adding maintenance regulations to Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) as appropriate. (Greg Pfof, Community Development Director)

III. Goal: Support the implementation of the Cultural Arts Plan.

A. Objective: Facilitate and enable working artists to have thriving careers based in Laguna Beach.

Strategies:

1. Explore the development of business assistance and incentives for creative sector businesses to locate in Laguna Beach. Consider permissions and supports to enable artists' temporary businesses in downtown, as recommended by the Economic Development and Business Assistance Subcommittee. (Lead: Sian Poeschl, Cultural Arts Department and Greg Pfof, Community Development Department)
2. Update the Arts and Economic Impact Study for Laguna Beach through participation in Americans for the Arts 2016 AEP V project. (Lead: Sian Poeschl, Cultural Arts Department)
3. Create an "Artists' Permit" that facilitates and coordinates permissions required for artists' projects through a one-stop process. (Lead: Sian Poeschl, Cultural Arts Department)

B. Objective: Expand the availability of engaging arts offering for residents and visitors.

Strategies:

1. Encourage and facilitate development of small-scale arts events and activities throughout the year, such as the music scene, café performances, salons, and poetry readings, that provide a greater amount and variety of choices suited to both residents and visitors, and that reinforce Laguna Beach's arts identity. (Lead: Sian Poeschl, Cultural Arts Department)

2. Enhance the current partnership for communitywide arts marketing involving the City, VLB, the Chamber, and the Laguna Beach Alliance for the Arts. Improvements to explore include: 1) a more robust and comprehensive, centralized calendar for arts events and activities; 2) a social media program; and, 3) becoming an entirely digital program. It might also include components such as adding arts to the Trolley app, better wayfinding and signage, coordinated promotions, and other ongoing efforts. (Lead: Sian Poeschl, Cultural Arts Department, Ashley Johnson, Visit Laguna Beach, and Laura Henkels, Chamber of Commerce)

3. Consider expansion of the current Passport to the Arts marketing collaborative, in cooperation with the communitywide arts marketing effort as defined in the above-referenced Strategy 2. The collaborative could potentially conduct joint research, receive capacity building assistance, and identify new shared marketing initiatives. (Lead: Sian Poeschl, Cultural Arts Department)