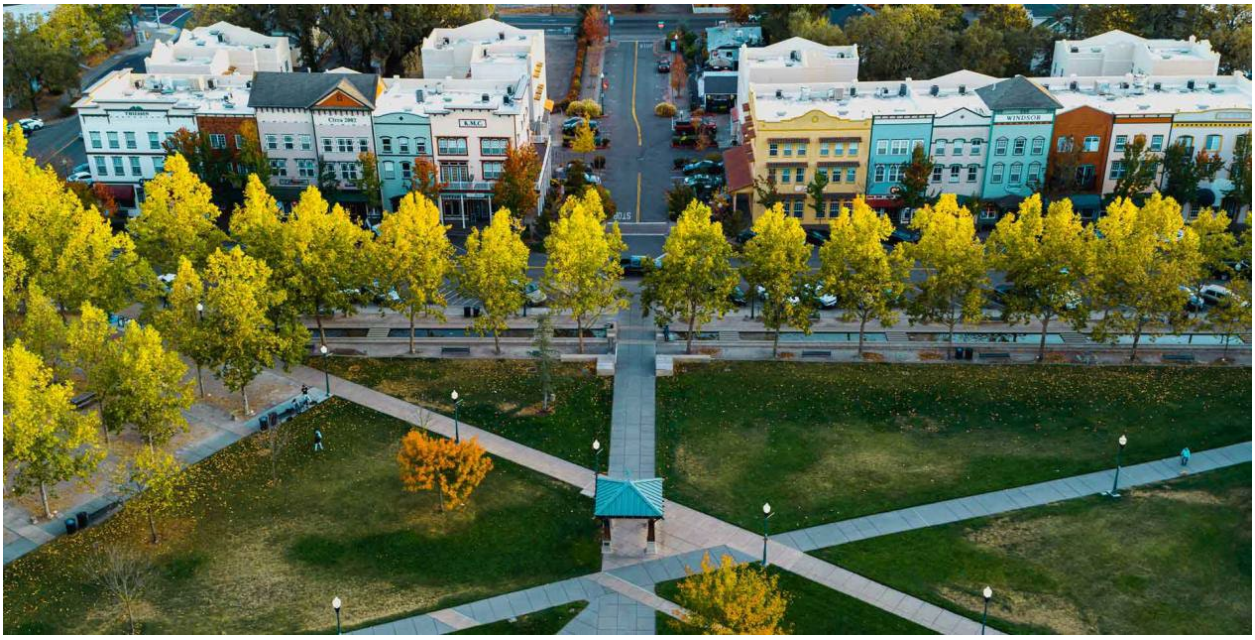
TOWN OF WINDSOR

Economic Development Strategic Plan



Community Engagement Report

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Feedback from Community Forum

On August 26, 2024, the Town of Windsor hosted a community forum on economic development. Following a presentation by the EDSP consulting team on the process and highlights of data findings, participants spent approximately 90 minutes in facilitated discussion on 5 questions. The following summarizes the response to each question.

Discussion Question 1: The five major goals of local economic development:

Goal #1: Creating quality jobs
Goal #2: Strengthening the Town's tax base
Goal #3: Expanding available goods & services
Goal #4: Investing in infrastructure/amenities
Goal #5: Supporting & expanding existing business

Comment on the level of importance of each of these goals for Windsor

- Goal 5 supports the other goals. Thought should be given to jobs that support airport and industrial areas

- For Goal 2, Town should think in terms of expanding overall revenue base – not just taxes; as a relatively young Town, Windsor lacks depth of funding resources. This should reflect/influence all other goals.

- Goal 4 (investing in infrastructure) is most important. The Town's infrastructure lags in all categories. The most needed investments are in the following infrastructure categories: internet/fiber, cellular, and water. Continue improvement of transportation and accessibility (bike lanes, sidewalks, paths, etc.).

- For Goal 3, the issue of "leakage" of resident retail/service demand deserves a lot of attention. Attracting additional shoppers, increasing tax base and bringing in more private investors would help.

- Goal 1 is critical because Windsor does not have enough quality jobs to retain the next generation of the workforce (i.e., young residents about to begin careers).

- For Goal 3, Windsor lacks childcare facilities. Increase opportunities for industrial sector. Few locations for quality development.

Question 2 – What are *Windsor's strongest assets* that are currently under-recognized or underdeveloped from an economic development point of view?

- Windsor is family-friendly/charming
- Windsor has a heavy industrial area (which is currently under-utilized); not all neighboring cities have areas for heavy industrial uses, so this gives Windsor a competitive advantage.
- Windsor has "amazing" special events throughout the year (but there is not consensus that these events have a positive impact on local businesses).
- Downtown area is an asset (suggestion: Town should consider permanent street closure in the Downtown).
- Train station (in a walkable area of Downtown) is going live next year.
- Residents have high income levels, creating demand for various types of local businesses.
- Agriculture/wine are the backbone of the Sonoma County economy.
- Windsor has mostly independent businesses (i.e., not national chains) with local owners; these businesses generate local economic benefits (i.e., more of the money stays in the local economy) and make Windsor unique/attractive to visitors.
- Windsor is a "geographically compact" community – makes it walkable and easy to get around.
- "Sunday Fun Day" (bike rides).
- There is industrial zoned land, close proximity to the airport.
- Public safety positive, low crime location, no visible homeless population like other places.

Question 3 – What are the *greatest challenges* related to Windsor's economic well-being and progress?

- Mobility is a challenge (Town is not fully "connected" – some areas lack sidewalks and bike lanes).

- Lack of resident engagement in leadership (few people run for office).

- There is a "disconnect" between residents/community and many of the Town's planning processes.

- With respect to public involvement in Town programs, there is competition for attention (business families and commuters often do not have time to engage in community affairs).

- Windsor no longer has a local newspaper (Windsor Times stopped publication about 5 years ago).

- Windsor has too many vacant retail spaces.

- Local retail stores are not "geared" to residents.

Question 4 – What types of *new development* – if any – would you most like to see in Windsor?

- **Retail/restaurant**
- **Office**
- **Business park/industrial**
- **Hotel**
- **Residential**

Participant comments:

- "All of the above!"
- Windsor could use new office space to support small businesses; currently there is limited office space and it is too expensive.
- Co-working space with meeting facilities.
- Hotel (downtown) with meeting space.
- Affordable housing (apartments, condominiums, ADU's).
- Boutiques
- High end hotels
- Campus-type companies
- Entertainment, family friendly retail, etc.
- Walking path over freeway

Question 5 – What types of *new industries/businesses* would you like to see local organizations devote resources to encouraging in the future?

- "Happy Lemon" (boba)
- Costco (not in Town Center) – some participants disagree about the feasibility and desirability of attracting a Costco to Windsor'
- Office supply store
- Small ("boutique") architecture and engineering firms (to create professional employment opportunities) – these types of firms could be targeted for the Windsor Business Park (Bell Road)
- Businesses that provide recreation for teenagers
- Live theater/performing arts venue
- Commercial kitchen/event facilities
- Professional services (including medical/dental offices)
- Satellite government services ("The Hub")
- Bookstore
- R&D/lab space and "maker space" (Bell Road)
- High-end winery space (tasting rooms) – there are already very good wine tasting rooms in Windsor, but they are relatively unknown
- Expand "Beverage District"
- Auto dealerships
- Health care facilities/hospital
- Another town center green

Feedback from Task Force Meeting #1

On August 27, 2024, the Town of Windsor convened a task force meeting of local stakeholders to review an overview of the EDSP process, a brief economic update and to participate in a facilitated discussion on the key issues, challenges and opportunity to be addressed as part of the EDSP. The following provides a summary of the input provided.

Topic 1 – Assets and Opportunities

Assets

- Tourism (EDSP should consider potential impact of new development on Town finances – especially Transient Occupancy Tax)
- Younger workforce
- Town/community are known to be welcoming to development (but this reputation has changed for the worse)
- The integration of light industrial uses into Town Plan makes Windsor an attractive business location
- Heavy industrial capacity (mostly undeveloped land), which is rare in Sonoma County)
- Windsor's proximity to Healdsburg and Santa Rosa (attractive visitor destinations) creates a "halo effect"
- Proximity to airport creates opportunities for ancillary businesses

Opportunities

- Opportunities to attract family-oriented businesses
- Active athletic fields create opportunities for to attract visitors for sports tourism (Sonoma County lacks infrastructure)
- Attract businesses with wages that match local housing costs
- Focus on medium density / median income affordable housing (other participants suggested providing affordable housing for *all* income groups; some indicated specifically that Windsor should not pursue high-density housing)
- Develop more cultural amenities (and activities and events related to the arts)
- Attract businesses from "business unfriendly" parts of the Bay Area
- Attract more hotels: Windsor is better positioned than Santa Rosa and Healdsburg for new hotel development (Santa Rosa's homeless issue is a threat to their visitor economy; Healdsburg has severe constraints on hotel development)
- Target "ag tech" and related businesses to Windsor's industrial areas
- Smart Train will create new development/business opportunities in Windsor

Topic 2 – Potential Threats to Economic Progress

Threats

- Public/political divide (NIMBYism) and communication issues between Town leadership and the business community
- Aging population/population moving (or not) out of Town
- Community resistance to intensifying use of land ("pushing a rock up hill")
- Town is reaching urban growth boundary
- Town has double approvals (e.g., housing is not treated the same as breweries); there is no common vision for what types of development the community wants and no clear path for approval of development projects – developers face uncertainty because of the lack of a "check list" for the approval process (example given of a hotel project that died because of a 17-month approval process)
- Town needs to improve plan check process
- Infrastructure deficiencies are an impediment to development

What can Town do?

- Fees for PGE, water, utilities, fiber, and trash (evaluated and lowered if needed)
- Problem with slow development approval/permitting is a countywide issue; Windsor can become a model of "best practices"

Barriers to business growth

- Trash agreement (Town Green) impacts HOA fees and commercial property rents and values
- Town should stay out of union issues (Project Labor Agreements, etc.)
- Lack of support for bi-lingual businesses (Town has no bi-lingual staff at front counter)
- Highspeed internet/broadband services

Topic 3 – Town Roles in Improving Economic Vitality

- There needs to be unity among elected officials on the types of development wanted in Windsor; there are also "fundamental issues" at staff level with respect to development friendliness
- In order to streamline development approval processes, Windsor needs to align staff with Town Council and Planning Commission
- Economic development is not mentioned in the Town Strategic Plan (and should be added as a focus in the plan)
- Measure the impact of economic development (to nurture the community's understanding of the potential benefits of new development); acknowledge "seat at the table" for different perspectives
- Establish a positive attitude form leadership that trickles down to the staff (currently, Windsor starts with "no" – how do we get to "yes"?)
- Commit to timeframes (KPI's) for development approvals/permits ("time is money and delays kill deals")
- Make approval process less discretionary (which can seem arbitrary)
- Recognize that the term "family friendly" has been weaponized against growth
- Given the potential for casino development, have a contingency plan to fully leverage related development/business opportunities
- Competing interests influencing projects (numerous unfinished projects)
- Economic development not included in city's 2-year plan
- Priority on existing projects for city
- City understanding process (timing and finance)
- Turnaround time on projects and process
- Twice the cost of plans if not done in timely manner
- Family-friendly position weaponized within the community
- What can private sector communicate to make process easier for city staff, etc.

Feedback from Community Survey

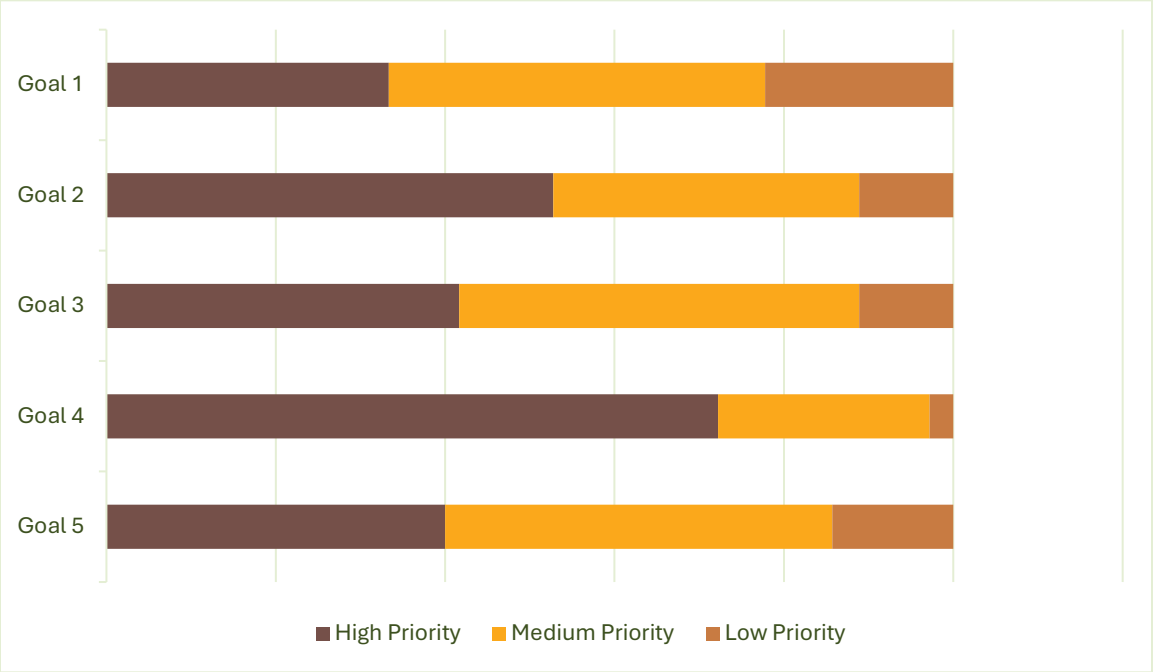
Commencing August 27, 2024 a community survey was available in English and Spanish to provide an additional opportunity for community feedback. The questions were similar to the questions posed to the community members during the August 26, 2024 community forum. The following summarizes the results through October 5, 2024 (36 responses to date).

Question 1 – At the local (town) level, economic development efforts typically focus on five major goals. Please rank each goal as a high priority, mid-level priority, or low priority.

	HIGH PRIORITY	MEDIUM PRIORITY	LOW PRIORITY
Goal #1: Improving the economic opportunities of local residents by fostering the creation of new, well-paying jobs	33.33%	44.44%	22.22%
Goal #2: Strengthening the Town's tax base to ensure sufficient revenues to support excellent community services	52.78%	36.11%	11.11%
Goal #3: Expanding the range of goods and services available in the community by attracting new consumer-oriented businesses (e.g., retail stores and restaurants)	41.67%	47.22%	11.11%
Goal #4: Investing in community infrastructure or amenities that increase overall quality of life and make the Town a more attractive place to live, work, visit and do business	72.22%	25.00%	2.78%
Goal #5: Supporting & expanding existing business	40.00%	45.71%	14.29%

Table 1 – Community Survey as of October 5, 2024

The graph below shows the responses based on the three priority levels.



Question 2 – What are Windsor's strongest assets that are currently under-recognized or underdeveloped from an economic development point of view (list up to five)?

A total of 107 responses were received (verbatim responses included in appendix). The responses were categorized into the following topics based on the asset description:

- Available Land & Sites
- Community Spirit
- Dining
- Events & Activities
- Family Oriented
- Grocery
- Health & Wellness
- Housing
- Public Safety
- Quality of Life
- Parks & Recreation
- Retail
- Rural Setting
- Schools
- Senior Activities
- Town Green
- Transportation



The word cloud depicts the frequence of the topic mentioned, with the larger words representing the most frequent mentioned.

Question 3 – What are the greatest challenges related to Windsor's economic well-being and progress (list up to 5)?

A total of 114 responses were received (verbatim responses included in appendix). The responses were categorized into the following topics based on the challenge description:

- Business Environment
- Casino
- Communication
- Community Facilities
- Development
- Employment
- Environment
- Fiscal Needs
- Growth
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Lack of Retail
- Mobility
- Parking
- Planning
- Public Safety
- Recreation Opportunities
- Retail
- Schools
- Traffic

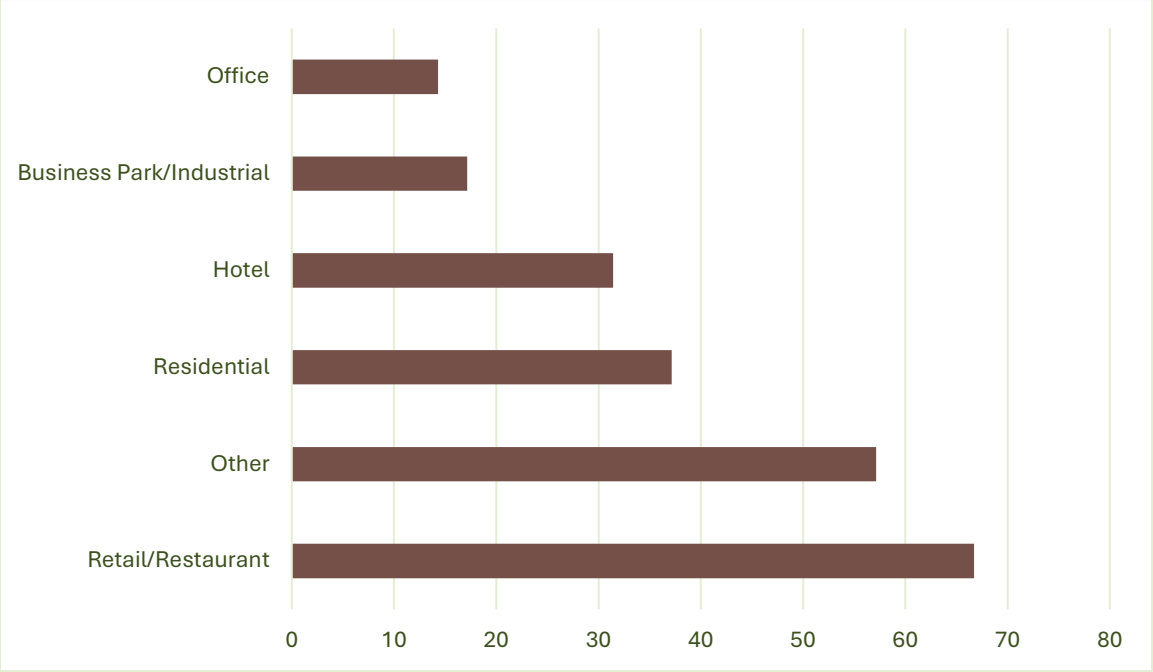


The word cloud depicts the frequence of the topic mentioned, with the larger words representing the most frequent mentioned.

Question 4 - What types of new development, if any, would you most like to see in Windsor (select as many as you like)?

Respondents were given the opportunity to weigh in on the types of development that they desired within Windsor from selected catagories or "other" where they can specify the type of development.

Retail, restaurant, and other resident serving opportunities were the highest desired types of new development.



Responses to "Other" Category	
Car wash	Single family development (not apartments)
Parking structure	Multiuse retail with residential
No more development	Water park/Amusement Park
Build what has already been approved	Small housing developments
Small retail (no big box stores)	Hotel
Hotel across from the McDonald's	Finish project north of Oliver's
Train Station	More housing
Entertainment	Target
Cultural (theater)	Appeal to Diverse community
Parking	None

Question 5 – What type of new industries/businesses would you like to see Windsor devote resources to recruiting/growing in the future (list up to 5)?

A total of 89 responses of new industires/businesses were submitted. The verbatium responses are contained in the appendix. To the extent possible, the responses were catagoriezed into common business classifications. In cases where a specific business was mentioned, it was catagorized seperately.



The results suggest strong support for the increase of retail and related businesses, such as restaurants, wine and beer tasting, and specialty retail. This was followed closely by entertainment, hotel and tourism related businesses.

Preliminary Observations

One of the objectives of the consulting team's community engagement is not just as a process for the EDSP but also an opportunity to deliver community ownership of the initiatives, strategies, and action plans that will ultimately become part of the EDSP.

The initial stakeholder and community engagement have provided the opportunity to learn and understand the challenges, observations and opportunities for the Town of Windsor. While there is still additional survey opportunities and stakeholder engagement, the following represents the consulting team's initial observations. As additional interviews and focus groups are conducted, a final list will be developed for review with the Town staff and the task force.

Strengths

1. Windsor offers a healthy business environment that is built on successful entrepreneurial and local business successes.
2. Windsor offers a strategic location for new business opportunities and an opportunity to reorient itself as such.
3. There is a strong sense of place, the Town Green, parks, recreational opportunities and a mix of housing contribute to the community feel.
4. Strategic infrastructure investments (such as the train) have positioned Windsor well.
5. Housing diversity has provided the Town to attract residents looking for a small-town experience which have brought professional and para-professional labor force to the community.

Weaknesses

1. Lack of hotel/lodging facilities to capture additional tourism revenues.
2. Services and resources are located in more populated areas, taking people away from community leading to retail leakage.
3. Traffic and mobility (pedestrian, bike, etc.) while prevalent, lacks vital connections such as connecting both sides of Hwy. 101.

Opportunities

1. Expand the Windsor story through wayfinding, marketing, branding.
2. Development of vacant developable parcels within the community (housing, commercial, hospitality).
3. Attract targeted retail opportunities to the community that contribute to the fiscal health of the community while preserving the highest and best use for developable property.
4. Increase specialty types of businesses related to health and wellness, recreational pursuits and tourism.
5. Enhance the Town's development process to encourage projects while maintaining the Town's development standards.

Threats

1. External cost factors such as PG&E, state tax structure and other costs to business can influence decisions to continued investment.
2. Continued increase in housing costs with a corresponding decrease in supply of housing can put strains on housing development.
3. Aging of population without the corresponding change in residency can develop strain on services as demands increase and revenues decrease.