

Economic Vitality Strategy

2010 Update



Community Development Department
1950 Parkside Drive, MS/01B
Concord, CA 94519-2578



CITY OF CONCORD

MISSION:

The City of Concord is an integral part of the business community. The City fosters a premier business location by creating and implementing innovative and flexible strategies that foster business growth and profitability.

VISION:

Concord is a financially stable City that strives to preserve and enhance its strong business climate and the community's high quality of life.

VALUES:

The City of Concord is committed to promoting partnerships among all interests and solving problems creatively. The City anticipates its customers' needs, communicates clearly and consistently, and delivers prompt service.

For more information:

Call the Economic Development Program at 1-800-727-2254
or e-mail economic_development@ci.concord.ca.us
www.concordfirst.com



Gateway Buildings

City of Concord Economic Vitality Strategy

INTRODUCTION

This Economic Vitality Strategy is organized to provide the following: a discussion of Concord's place in the East Bay market, which includes current opportunities and challenges; identification of key industries for business attraction efforts; and descriptions of the primary goals and objectives that will guide the City's economic development efforts throughout the next five years.

The Economic Vitality Strategy sets the vision, goals, and priorities for all City efforts related to economic development. The Strategy is updated every five years, in coordination with the City's General Plan, Redevelopment Plan, and other policy documents.

This 2009 version of the Economic Vitality Strategy was put together with the help of many local business leaders, residents, property owners, and other stakeholders who participated in a series of 14 meetings that were held in April-June 2009. The Strategy also incorporates data and analysis

from the Contra Costa Council, Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), and other sources.

By taking a long-term, comprehensive approach to economic development, the City of Concord seeks to:

- Enhance Concord's quality of life;
- Facilitate a stable, healthy business environment;
- Retain, attract, and expand businesses in strategic industries;
- Expand the City's tax base to ensure long-term fiscal stability;
- Provide efficient, effective government services to Concord businesses;
- Promote high-quality job opportunities;
- Maintain a highly-skilled, competitive workforce;
- Support entrepreneurship and small business opportunities; and
- Revitalize Downtown and other business districts.

CONCORD'S POSITION IN THE EAST BAY MARKET

Concord is the largest business center in Contra Costa County. It is a destination for innovative and entrepreneurial businesses that require highly skilled labor. Concord offers the infrastructure and amenities that businesses need to succeed. Its vibrant business environment has attracted key firms and created ideal conditions for local businesses to expand. The City's commitment to families and to the business community fosters a high quality of life with attractive residential neighborhoods, excellent public safety and services, convenient mass transit, abundant recreation and entertainment for all ages. Concord is a community of safe and friendly neighborhoods with an excellent park system, convenient shopping, diverse dining opportunities, and large preserves of scenic open space.

Concord has distinguished itself as a premier business destination due to several key advantages:

- A central, convenient location;
- Best value for office/industrial space;
- Access to a tech-skilled workforce; and
- An efficient, responsive, business-friendly government.

Successes & Challenges

This 2009 update of the Vitality Strategy comes at a time when Concord faces several critical challenges and opportunities. On one hand, Concord has achieved some key successes in economic development since 2002, when the Vitality Strategy was last updated. These successes place Concord in an ideal position to significantly expand and upgrade existing businesses and to attract new business. Some of the City's most notable achievements include:

- Opening of Renaissance, Centre Point, Legacy, and other high-end residential projects.
- Completion of John Muir Health's Core Laboratory and 174,000 sq. ft. expansion of John Muir's Concord Campus.
- \$33 million remodel of Clayton Valley Shopping Center.

Bank of America Tech Center



- Attraction of major regional retail tenants to Sunvalley Shopping Center, the Willows, and the Park & Shop Center.
- Attraction of key shops and restaurants to the downtown.
- Construction of NorthPointe Business Park and other office projects in North Concord.
- Increasing attendance of concerts and events at Todos Santos Plaza to more than 200,000 visitors per year, including the Concordstock public art project.
- Attracting key retailers and restaurants, including: Sport Chalet, Lowes, BJ's Brewhouse, 99 Ranch, E.J. Phair's, Seafood City, and others.

Despite these successes, Concord's economy was affected by the 2008 nationwide recession, which resulted in over 10% unemployment and the closure of several financial services businesses. Presently, Concord faces an array of challenges and opportunities for its economy, including:

- Building Concord's image/identity
- The Concord Community Reuse Project (former Concord Naval Weapons Station)
- Opportunities to attract emerging industries (e.g., cleantech, life sciences, etc.)
- Redevelopment of areas in the downtown
- Changes in the regional retail market
- Large development-ready pads in North Concord, Downtown and elsewhere
- Consolidation of auto retail, financial services, and other employment sectors
- Statewide exodus of manufacturing

KEY INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

Over the past 20 years, several industries have driven job growth in Concord (and Contra Costa County in general), such as manufacturing, construction, and information technology. These industries will continue to be important sources of jobs, but in some cases they are not expected to continue the rapid growth that was experienced previously. As a result, the City needs to identify additional industries that offer the potential for job growth in the future.

Looking forward to the next 5–20 years, several new industries are becoming increasingly important to Concord’s economy and have the potential to become major drivers in employment. These industries include:

- Health Care
- Financial Services
- Retail
- Engineering
- Green/Clean-Tech/Energy
- Applied Sciences
- Life Sciences / Biotechnology
- Professional & Business Services



Downtown BART Station Plaza



John Muir Health Core Lab

These emerging industries may have special needs with respect to infrastructure, workforce development, Zoning and General Plan issues, and business services. The City will incorporate the needs of these key industries as it works to continuously improve its delivery of efficient, effective business services, and as it continues to update the Zoning Code (scheduled for completion in 2010) and other City policies.

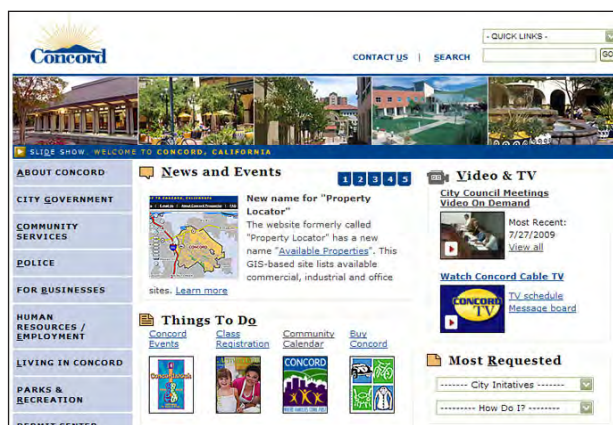
The City’s Economic Development Program will also develop targeted marketing strategies and other initiatives – all in a coordinated effort to facilitate the growth of these industries in Concord. The means to accomplish this is discussed in the following section, which describes the strategic initiatives to be undertaken as part of the Vitality Strategy.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Goal #1: Develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated Economic Development Marketing Strategy to strengthen Concord's image and brand identity among key target industries

Objective 1.1: Develop and carry out an integrated Marketing and Public Information Campaign targeted to prospective new businesses, based on a well-defined branding strategy.

- A. Market Research & Branding Strategy.** The Economic Development Program will conduct marketing research and develop a well-defined branding strategy for the City.
- B. City Website and Internet Marketing.** Economic Development staff will comprehensively update, reorganize, re-brand, and promote the City's Economic Development website. The City's Economic Development Program will carry out Internet advertising campaigns as appropriate. Websites would be selected based on their ability to reach key groups that the City targets for business attraction. In addition, the City's Economic Development Program will consider initiatives to communicate the City's message using well-established community websites, social networking websites, blogs, webzines, and other websites.
- C. Broadcast & Mass-Media Strategies.** As appropriate, Economic Development staff will carry out advertising campaigns on radio, cable television, and other broadcast media that are selected based on their cost-effective ability to reach the geographic and psychographic groups that Concord wishes to target for attracting potential new businesses.
- D. Press & Publicity.** The City's Economic Development Program will develop a 12-month press calendar, which will allow staff to plan in advance to issue press releases and/or media advisories. The goal would be to place positive coverage of Concord in the press at least once per month for an entire year. This would keep Concord active in the public's awareness for a sustained period. Economic Development staff will also develop proactive relationships with journalists and editors of key publications and websites in order to cultivate and pitch favorable story ideas. Public relations efforts would coordinate with the editorial calendars of key weekly/monthly publications, such as Via, Sunset, Southwest In-Flight ("Spirit"), Forbes, Wired, the San Francisco Business Times, Diablo Magazine, and other key publications.



City of Concord Website

E. Brochures & Trade Shows. The City’s Economic Development Program will redesign its line of brochures, maps and other collateral materials that are intended for prospective businesses so that they have up-to-date content and are consistent with the City’s brand strategy. Economic Development staff could also reach existing local businesses using special inserts to the business newsletter and/or annual mailings of business license renewals, which are mailed to all 6,000 business license holders. In partnership with the East Bay Economic Development Administration and other support agencies, Economic Development staff will attend key trade shows and business events and will plan meetings in advance in order to maximize the effectiveness of the attendance.

Objective 1.2: Develop partnerships with businesses and other government agencies to help market the Central Contra Costa region and to leverage the City’s limited marketing funds.

A. Regional Internet Marketing Efforts. The City’s Economic Development Program has started a pilot program to partner with other cities to market central Contra Costa County as a destination for shopping, events, and recreation.

B. Public Service Announcements. The City’s Economic Development Program will partner with BART to display public service announcements in their system to build awareness of Concord. Similarly, the Economic Development staff will explore Public Service Announcements with billboard companies (e.g., ClearChannel, CBS).

C. Partnerships with Regional Retailers and Hotels. The City’s Economic Development Program will partner with Sunvalley Shopping Center, the Willows, local hotels, the auto dealership community, and other major sales tax generators and regional shopping centers to further promote Concord as a shopping and entertainment destination.

Objective 1.3: Integrate the City’s economic development branding strategy into non-advertising efforts throughout the City.

A. Streetscape Image & Identity. Banners on major arterials (Clayton, Concord, Willow Pass, etc.) provide a cost-effective opportunity to promote the new brand image of Concord.

B. Special Events. The City will continue to sponsor downtown promotions and cultural events at Todos Santos Plaza including the Farmer’s Market, Music Series, Halloween parade, holiday events, and other special events.



Downtown Concord

Goal #2: Develop long-term, integrated strategies to target key emerging industries in Concord

Objective 2.1: Develop strategies to facilitate and encourage the development of modern, high-quality office, flex-office, research, and industrial space that can attract and serve the needs of key industry clusters.

- A. Facilitating Development Planning & Development Approval Process.** The City's Economic Development Program will work with industry contacts to determine the site requirements, building requirements, infrastructure requirements, and other development standards that are needed in order to attract and foster the development of key industrial tenants in Concord. Using this data, Economic Development staff will work internally with Planning, Building, Engineering, Finance, Public Works, and other parts of the City to incorporate the needs of key industry clusters into the development planning and development approval processes.
- B. Targeted Marketing Efforts.** As part of the marketing efforts described in Objective 1.1 above, the City's Economic Development Program will conduct outreach to prominent industry leaders, trade organizations, brokers, developers, and other influential representatives for each of the key industry clusters mentioned above.
- C. Planning for Life Cycle of Company Expansion.** The City will pursue strategies to facilitate the business and real estate needs of emerging industries at different points in their growth. The goal will be for companies to feel confident that Concord is an excellent location to address their needs as they progress from the start-up phase to reaching maturity as a medium- to large-sized business occupying one or multiple facilities. This will require partnerships with local brokers and property owners, partnerships with the Contra Costa Small Business Development Center, East Bay EDA and other organizations serving small businesses, incorporating the long-term growth needs of key industries into planning for the Concord Community Reuse Plan, and other related efforts.
- D. Retail Attraction.** The City's Economic Development Program will seek opportunities to attract retail to key commercial areas and to promote a diversified mix of retail uses, including business-to-business retail, non-traditional retail, as well as more standard consumer-based retail such as restaurants, grocery, and specialty retail.

Objective 2.2: Enhance Educational and Workforce Development Opportunities

- A. Program Assessment and Facilitation.** The City's Economic Development Program will continue to support the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, the Mt. Diablo Unified School District, and EastBayWorks along with the Contra Costa Workforce Development Board, California Employment Development Department, California State East Bay – Concord, and other educational institutions in their effort to link the business community to local educational resources.
- B. Community Training.** The City's Economic Development Program will work with Local, Regional and State Agencies who are focused on building a diversified training and retraining program to meet the rapidly changing technical and professional needs of the business community. The City's Economic Development Program will promote partnerships and support of the Mt. Diablo Unified School District, Diablo Valley College, EastBayWorks, Contra Costa Small Business Development Center, Workforce Development Board, and other agencies in promoting their training programs and referral services.



Clayton Road

Goal #3: District Strategies

The City’s Economic Development Program will continue to implement its downtown revitalization strategy, and will begin developing comprehensive district strategies for all business districts in Concord. The key business districts to be focused upon initially will include:

- Clayton Road
- West Concord (bound roughly by Concord Ave., I-680 and Highway 242)
- Monument Boulevard
- Other districts as time and resources are available



West Concord

Objective 3.1: Develop district strategies for Concord’s key Districts

The City’s Economic Development Program will develop and implement comprehensive district strategies for Clayton Road, West Concord, Monument Boulevard, and other Districts as time and resources provide. These strategies will incorporate the unique characteristics of each business area, promote the businesses currently operating in these areas, and encourage reinvestment and development opportunities for business attraction efforts.

Objective 3.2: Continue Downtown Revitalization Efforts

A. Downtown Management & Merchant Organization. The City’s Economic Development Program will continue to support the activities of the Todos Santos Business Association in order to strengthen relationships between the City and the business community. Where possible, the City’s Economic Development Program will develop programs to address the needs raised by this association in a proactive manner. In addition, the City will execute a comprehensive Downtown Management Program that addresses issues related to appearance, maintenance, safety, and parking.



Monument Boulevard

B. Special Events. The City will continue to sponsor promotions and cultural events at Todos Santos Plaza including the Farmer’s Market, Music Series, car shows, Halloween parade, and holiday events. The City will review opportunities to co-sponsor and/or present new special events in the downtown area that promote the downtown businesses, community identity, the arts, and are consistent with the businesses in the downtown.

Goal #4: Retain, Expand, Develop and Attract Business

Objective 4.1: Strengthen the positive business climate that supports the growth, development, and prosperity of Concord's business community.

- A. Annual Business Survey.** The City's Economic Development Program will continue to seek the input of businesses on an annual basis through a business survey. The survey will gather information about existing firms, evaluate the business climate and identify business problems, business opportunities, and expanding or relocating firms.
- B. Customer Service.** The City of Concord will continue to provide the highest level of customer service to further expedite permit decisions, coordinate inter-jurisdictional permit reviews, speed, clarify, and ease communication between applicants and permitting agencies and provide training and support to further implement improvements to customer service.
- C. Ombudsman and Information Services.** Economic Development staff will continue to serve as an ombudsman and information resource to existing businesses, providing information, direction, advice and documents on all issues pertaining to doing business in Concord and Contra Costa County.
- D. Business Communications.** The City's Economic Development Program will continue to regularly communicate with residents, businesses, property owners, and other stakeholders and partners using electronic media, print sources, flyers, advertisements, radio, television, e-mail notifications, and other appropriate avenues to ensure information of interest is provided to Concord's residential and business community.
- E. Business Recognition Award Program.** In cooperation with the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, the City will continue to honor throughout the year companies that have shown significant growth or innovation, have longevity in Concord, support Concord's community, are major employers, or are major revenue generators.
- F. Welcome Letters.** The City's Economic Development Program will continue to send welcome letters, signed by the Mayor and City Manager, to targeted new businesses in Concord in order to make them feel welcome, promote cooperation with City Hall, and provide a City contact when issues arise that affect the success of the business.



Business Recognition Award Recipients with the Chamber of Commerce

Objective 4.2: Provide assistance to attract, retain, and expand businesses in Concord.

A. Goodwill Visits. The City’s Economic Development Program will continue to conduct goodwill visits to major employers and sales tax generators to build strong, long-term relationships, improve communication between the City and the business community, demonstrate Concord’s concern for its existing major businesses, and to encourage these businesses to remain and expand in Concord.



Concord Small Business Seminar

B. Business Retention Visits. The City’s Economic Development Program will continue to conduct business retention/expansion/welcome visits to small businesses that are expanding, new to the community, or in a growth sector. These efforts build rapport with the business community, encourage communication between the public and private sectors and encourages these businesses to remain and expand in Concord.

C. Participation in business events and community building activities. The City’s Economic Development Program will support local business organizations’ efforts that encourage business leaders to contribute to the community by having staff serve on appropriate task forces and special committees, contribute to projects, and sponsor events.

D. Home Based Businesses. The City will continue to support the development of entrepreneurs in home based businesses by administering business licenses and home based business permits to these businesses and supporting their expansion into storefronts and offices.

E. Small Business Seminars. Economic Development staff will continue to facilitate small business seminars and other programs with its partners such as the Contra Costa Small Business Development Center, Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Development Board, Todos Santos Business Association, The Federal Technology Center, and the Small Business Administration. These seminars provide new information and resources on marketing, planning, management, financing, and other topics of interest to Concord’s small business community. These events also promote local business-to-business transactions and the City’s “Buy Concord” initiatives.

F. Business Attraction. The City’s Economic Development Program will continue to pursue attraction efforts by identifying sites and available space that would be appropriate for businesses in all sectors. The City’s Economic Development Program will aggressively work with brokers, realtors, site selectors, the East Bay Economic Development Alliance, Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, and the Todos Santos Business Association to evaluate and encourage opportunities for new businesses that enhance our economic base. The City’s Economic Development Program will also continue to work with brokers and property owners on land assembly opportunities for larger development projects.

The initiatives in this document will further develop the City’s economic vitality and ensure Concord’s position as a premier business location.



For more information:

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