

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: May 7, 2025

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Tim Ricard, Economic Development Manager
Subject: Economic Development Strategic Plan

Recommendation to Council:

Adopt the Town of Windsor Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP).

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goal of Fiscal Health. Goal Statement: Ensure the economic health and long-term financial viability of the Town.

Background:

Recognizing the need to update the outdated 2008 Economic Development Strategic Plan, the Town Council allocated \$100,000 in the FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 budgets for the development and implementation of the EDSP. The vision for the document is to serve as a dynamic roadmap for fostering economic growth, supporting businesses, and enhancing the community's quality of life.

Following an extensive selection process, the Town entered into a Professional Services Agreement with Economic Growth Strategies to assist in developing the plan.

The development of the Town of Windsor's Strategic Plan followed a comprehensive and inclusive process, designed to reflect community priorities while addressing Windsor's unique economic challenges and opportunities. This work began with data collection and analysis, which was used to inform a robust community and stakeholder engagement process.

Data Collection and Analysis

The consulting team compiled and analyzed updated economic datasets, providing a quantitative foundation for assessing current economic conditions and trends. Key economic insights include:

- Retail Leakage & Taxable Sales – Windsor's taxable sales per capita are among the lowest in Sonoma County, with 24% of resident spending leaking to other jurisdictions. Expanding local retail, particularly in motor vehicles and specialty goods, can reduce revenue loss.
- Employment & Workforce Trends – More than 85% of Windsor's workforce commutes outside the town, primarily to Santa Rosa. Key industries losing workers include healthcare, professional services, and manufacturing, highlighting the need to attract more local employers.
- Industry Strengths & Opportunities – Windsor's largest retail generators include Home Depot and Walmart, while growth sectors include boutique hospitality, specialty businesses, and light industrial enterprises.

- Demographics & Housing – Windsor’s population declined by 3.1% since 2020, and housing affordability remains a challenge. With a high homeownership rate (75.7%), expanding rental and workforce housing is crucial for economic sustainability.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Community input played a central role in shaping the EDSP. The engagement process included multiple opportunities for residents, businesses, and key stakeholders to contribute their insights.

- Community & Stakeholder Meetings – Round 1 (August 2024)
 - Two meetings were held: one for the general community and another for key stakeholders, focusing on Windsor’s economic vision, strengths, and concerns.
- Community Survey (August–September 2024)
 - A town-wide survey in both English and Spanish was distributed to residents and businesses, collecting data on economic development priorities, challenges, and opportunities.
 - The survey results provided quantitative and qualitative insights to inform the plan’s development.
- Stakeholder Interviews (September–October 2024)
 - One-on-one interviews with business leaders, community organizations, and government officials provided detailed perspectives on specific economic challenges and opportunities.
- Community & Stakeholder Meetings – Round 2 (November 2024)
 - Two follow-up meetings were held: one for the general community and another for key stakeholders, allowing participants to:
 - Review insights from previous meetings, surveys, and interviews.
 - Discuss initial recommendations for the EDSP, including vision, strategy themes, and potential action items.
 - Provide feedback to ensure alignment with community priorities.

Discussion:

The Economic Development Strategic Plan is designed to advance Windsor’s vision by supporting local business growth, fostering innovation, and enhancing the community’s quality of life.

To achieve this vision, the Economic Development Action Plan outlines five core goals, each supported by targeted strategies and initiatives aimed at strengthening business vitality, encouraging innovation, and improving overall community well-being. These goals serve as a strategic roadmap for Windsor’s long-term economic growth.

Windsor envisions a resilient, sustainable economy that upholds its identity as a vibrant, family-oriented, and innovative town. The EDSP’s core goals include:

1. Fostering Business & Economic Vitality – Creating a thriving business environment that encourages innovation, entrepreneurship, and resilience.
2. Developing Effective Tools & Policies – Implementing policies and resources that support responsible development and community-centered growth.
3. Targeting Key Sectors – Prioritizing business sectors that align with Windsor’s strengths and promote sustainable economic expansion.
4. Strengthening Windsor’s Identity – Enhancing Windsor’s reputation as a destination for business,

tourism, and talent.

5. Enhancing Quality of Life – Building a high-quality living environment with strong amenities, healthcare access, and cultural opportunities.

Economic Development Action Plan:

The Draft EDSP includes a structured Action Plan outlining specific initiatives to support each goal, as well as metrics for measuring performance and outcomes. This plan focuses on actionable strategies to drive economic development, enhance business support, and improve Windsor’s overall economic resilience. Key elements include:

- Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Programs – Strengthening engagement with local businesses through proactive outreach, support services, and workforce development initiatives.
- Infrastructure & Development Support – Streamlining permitting processes, enhancing infrastructure investments, and encouraging strategic land use planning to support business growth.
- Targeted Industry Attraction – Identifying and recruiting key industries such as advanced manufacturing, tourism, and boutique hospitality to align with Windsor’s economic strengths.
- Marketing & Branding Initiatives – Expanding efforts to promote Windsor as a premier destination for businesses, residents, and visitors through coordinated marketing and regional partnerships.
- Performance Metrics & Accountability – Establishing measurable benchmarks to track economic development progress, including job creation, business growth, and revenue generation.

March 19th Council Feedback and Plan Revisions

At the March 19 Town Council meeting, staff presented the Draft Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) and received valuable feedback from the Council and community members. The Council expressed strong support for the grassroots nature of the planning process, particularly the deep engagement of residents and businesses in shaping the plan.

Several suggestions were offered to strengthen the EDSP. Key input included:

Emphasize Heavy Industrial Growth – Add greater focus on attracting and retaining heavy industrial businesses.

- The “Targeting Key Sectors” goal now includes a dedicated focus on heavy industrial uses, particularly in employment-designated areas.

Highlight Windsor’s Central Location – Promote Windsor’s geographic position as the “heart of Sonoma County.”

Address Business Cost Challenges – Reflect concerns about rising insurance premiums and garbage service costs.

- Rising garbage and insurance costs have been acknowledged as economic threats in the updated SWOT framework.

Prioritize Hotel Development – Reinforce the importance of advancing the downtown hotel project.

- The downtown hotel is now highlighted as a near-term catalyst project in the Action Plan.

Highlight Youth-Focused Businesses – Elevate opportunities for businesses that serve youth and families.

- Youth focused businesses added to the Tourism targeted sector strategy.

Fiscal Impact:

The proposed action does not require additional funding. The total fiscal impact of the original Professional Services Agreement, \$97,500, was fully funded through appropriations in the General Fund as included in the Council-approved Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget.

Environmental Review:

The recommended action does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378 and requires no environmental review.

Attachment(s):

[1. Economic Development Strategic Plan](#)

[Appendix A 1 Goals Table](#)

[Appendix B - Community Engagement Report](#)

[Appendix C- Dataset Report](#)

[Appendix D - Cowork Space Opportunity Analysis](#)

[14.1 Economic Development Strategic Plan PowerPoint \(Distributed 2025-05-06\)](#)

[14.1 Correspondence Received \(Distributed 2025-05-07\)](#)

Prepared by:

Tim Ricard

Economic Development Manager

Reviewed by:

Nick Walker

Administrative Services Director

Approved by:

Jon Davis

Town Manager