

Economic Development Stakeholder Meeting Summary

On November 15, 2024, the City Manager and staff met with representatives of local business groups. These groups included the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, Salinas United Business Association, Salinas City Center Improvement Association, and Salinas Valley Tourism and Visitors Bureau. The group discussed current City efforts and challenges related to business development, the General Plan Update, and draft Economic Development Element (EDE). Described below are the themes from the dialogue portion of the meeting. Attendees also participated in a dot voting activity to prioritize draft EDE goals, policies, and actions.

Themes:

The biggest theme from the discussion was the desire to change regulations, processes, and culture at the City level to make it easier to start and grow businesses. This includes updating municipal code to address common regulatory stumbling blocks that it has control over, such as the master sign permit, or overly strict zoning use regulations. The City should identify ways to streamline permit processes to make them understandable and easier to navigate and improve consistency in communication and enforcement. City staff should be empowered to help the community get to “yes” on development, which also requires a culture/mindset shift towards a collaborative approach with applicants.

Discussion notes:

Observations:

- Business organizations like those here would like to partner with City to market/attract new businesses.
- Better centralization of resources and referrals.
- It can take time for changes (revitalization), don't give up.
- More collaboration and forums like this.
- Make sure information is available at a click, several website issues, information challenging to find, broken links.
- More collaboration with Monterey County Business Council
- Easier to grow from existing/local business but don't ignore the big ones
- Need to find a balance between new economy and brick and mortar
- Master sign permit challenging
- Sign process does not incentivize rule following
- Amazon has moved mountains, but others could be driven away by process challenges
- Road conditions, make sure it is in Circulation element

- Stakeholders noted problems with vendors selling in parking lots and driveways.
- Also unapproved vendors using social media to sell out of their homes.
- Did note less unapproved vendors out since enforcement began.

Recommendations:

- Make it easier (regs, signs, fees) to stand up small businesses
- Big support for saying “yes” and permit streamlining
 - Culture challenge in staff
- Cross collaboration with large organizations.
- New idea to create an Economic Development strike team.
- More communication w/ City- Example: Support with ADA compliance.
 - One place for people/businesses to access information, issues can be communicated to a broad group- like the issues with the ADA lawsuits in the Alisal.
- Create a way to track real time property availability
- Recommended enforcement strategy - > random weekends, couple times a month.
- Targeted enforcement (Example: Parade of Lights).

EDE Activity: Top ranking Goal, Policies and Actions

Top Goal:

Goal ED-2: Encourage a thriving business environment through supporting start-ups, growing current businesses, and attracting new industry to build a dynamic economic landscape in Salinas with higher paying employment opportunities.

Top Policies:

- **Policy ED-2.2:** Promote entrepreneurship and business innovation and expansion.
- **Policy ED-5.1:** Improve the appearance, accessibility and cleanliness of the city and its commercial corridors.
- **Policy ED-2.1:** Build relationships with business and property owners.
- **Policy ED-1.2:** Support the advancement of agricultural productivity and technology.

Top Actions:

- **ED-2.2.2:** Leverage existing small business support resources to promote entrepreneurial activities.
- **ED-2.2.3:** Increase zoning flexibility to accommodate diverse business needs and spur innovation through Zoning Code update.

- **ED-2.1.1:** Develop a business retention program.
- **ED-2.1.3:** Work to streamline licensing and permitting processes to ease administrative burdens for businesses.
- **ED-1.2.2:** Attract investments in agricultural technology by promoting Salinas as a hub for agricultural innovation.

Goal ED-1: Cultivate a diverse and adaptive economy that aligns with future economic trends and reinforces Salinas' leadership in the agricultural industry.

Policy	Related Actions
<p>Policy ED-1.1: Encourage economic expansion in compatible high-tech industries.</p> <p align="center">4 votes</p>	<p>ED-1.1.1: Collaborate with local and regional educational institutions to develop training programs tailored to the needs of the high-tech industry. 5</p> <p>ED-1.1.2: Identify and maintain a database of strategically located business sites that are ideal for high-tech companies. 4</p> <p>ED-1.1.3: Launch a targeted marketing strategy to attract high-tech firms to Salinas, emphasizing the city's commitment to technological growth and innovation. 4</p>
<p>Policy ED-1.2: Support the advancement of agricultural productivity and technology.</p> <p align="center">7 votes</p>	<p>ED-1.2.1: Foster partnerships with technology providers and research organizations to integrate advanced technologies into local agriculture.</p> <p>ED-1.2.2: Attract investments in agricultural technology by promoting Salinas as a hub for agricultural innovation. 11</p> <p>ED-1.2.3: Identify and incentivize agri-business supply chain expansion opportunities for new and existing enterprises. 1</p> <p>ED-1.2.4: Address agricultural infrastructure needs to support modernized farming practices and increased productivity. 2</p> <p>ED-1.2.5: Encourage workforce training programs focused on agricultural technology to ensure the sector remains competitive and innovative. 2</p> <p>ED-1.2.6: Work with the industry to reduce climate impacts and adapt to changes such as increased temperatures, volatile precipitation, water supply threats, and increased pests. 1</p>

Goal ED-2: Encourage a thriving business environment through supporting start-ups, growing current businesses, and attracting new industry to build a dynamic economic landscape in Salinas with higher paying employment opportunities.

Policy	Related Actions
<p>Policy ED-2.1: Build relationships with business and property owners.</p> <p>8 votes</p>	<p>ED-2.1.1: Develop a business retention program. 12</p> <p>ED-2.1.2: Continue to expand Small Business Navigator assistance to guide and support local businesses through regulatory processes. 8</p> <p>ED-2.1.3: Work to streamline licensing and permitting processes to ease administrative burdens for businesses. 11</p> <p>ED-2.1.4: Support businesses with code compliance correction process.</p>
<p>Policy ED-2.2: Promote entrepreneurship and business innovation and expansion.</p> <p>10 votes</p>	<p>ED-2.2.1: Facilitate the creation of designated spaces for business incubators to nurture new ventures. 1</p> <p>ED-2.2.2: Leverage existing small business support resources to promote entrepreneurial activities. 16</p> <p>ED-2.2.3: Increase zoning flexibility to accommodate diverse business needs and spur innovation through Zoning Code update. 13</p> <p>ED-2.2.4: Evaluate a rental assistance program for commercial renters. 1</p>
<p>Policy ED-2.3: Improve access to capital for all stages of business growth.</p> <p>4 votes</p>	<p>ED-2.3.1: Collaborate with financial institutions to facilitate easier access to business loans and credit. 7</p> <p>ED-2.3.2: Promote microloan programs targeted at small businesses to ensure broad availability of financial resources. 3</p> <p>ED-2.3.3: Coordinate financial literacy education to empower business owners and enhance their capacity for sustainable growth. 2</p> <p>ED-2.3.4: Explore funding for undocumented owners.</p>

Goal ED-3: Narrow social and economic disparities in the City of Salinas through workforce development and community support.

Policy	Related Actions
<p>Policy ED-3.1: Increase access to education and vocational training programs for youth and adult learners to improve economic security.</p> <p>1 vote</p>	<p>ED-3.1.1: Partner with local and regional educational institutions and nonprofit organizations to increase graduation rates, literacy, vocational programs and job opportunities. 2</p> <p>ED-3.1.2: Encourage educational institutions and workforce development programs based on employer/industry needs. 4</p> <p>ED-3.1.3: Create or recruit new job training programs (e.g., JobCorps).</p> <p>ED-3.1.4: Continue support of non-profit organizations working with youth programs focused on career exploration and job readiness (e.g. Digital Nest, Rancho Cielo, Girls Inc., etc.). 5</p> <p>ED-3.1.5: Support workforce development training for green economy and climate adaptation jobs. 1</p>
<p>Policy ED-3.2: Promote economic security by providing access to economic opportunities for all workers and households in the community.</p> <p>2 votes</p>	<p>ED-3.2.1: Technical assistance, grant opportunities and other services, focusing on small businesses in underserved areas of the community. 2</p> <p>ED-3.2.2: Build partnerships with organizations that assist marginalized populations find employment and become self-sufficient. 1</p> <p>ED-3.2.3: Seek development opportunities that will increase the number of professional-level jobs that offer family-supportive wages, paid sick days, and health care insurance, and protect worker safety, so college-educated residents can find appropriate jobs in their home city. 1</p> <p>ED-3.2.4: Prioritize employment opportunities for Salinas' residents through tools such as community benefit agreements, employer incentives, and local preference policies. 3</p> <p>ED-3.2.5: Support reskilling and apprenticeship programs that provide upward career mobility for residents particularly those in underserved areas of the community. 2</p>

Goal ED-3: Narrow social and economic disparities in the City of Salinas through workforce development and community support.

Policy	Related Actions
<p>Policy ED-3.3: Empower Salinas residents to take an active role in neighborhood revitalization.</p> <p>*What do these mean?</p> <p>4 votes</p>	<p>ED-3.3.1: Promote the establishment of a system of neighborhood-level resident representation to empower/engage local neighborhoods in their own revitalization process. 3</p> <p>ED-3.3.2: In collaboration with neighborhood representatives and/ or other community groups and organizations, leverage the use of technology to promote low-cost, short-term activities that revitalize neighborhoods and enhance quality of life to further long-term economic change. 2</p> <p>ED-3.3.3: Support the emotional well-being of residents by creating safe opportunities for residents to connect with their neighbors, especially when they are from a different culture or background. 1</p>

Goal ED-4: Enhance retail, entertainment, and tourism opportunities throughout the City.

<p>Policy ED-4.1: Enhance marketing, promotion, and branding efforts and develop a City-wide retail strategy to combat sales tax leakage.</p> <p>1 vote</p>	<p>ED-4.1.1: Promote the City's unique neighborhoods as cultural, arts, and shopping destinations. 5</p> <p>ED-4.1.2: Attract new retail development that will expand the variety and quality of goods and services for existing residents without harming existing, locally-owned businesses. 8</p> <p>ED-4.1.3: Develop a branding and marketing strategy that promotes Salinas as a culture, art, and retail destination. 4</p>
<p>Policy ED-4.2: Enhance tourism opportunities by promoting Salinas' history, cultural diversity, and positive attributes.</p> <p>3 votes</p>	<p>ED-4.2.1: Create destination-based and identifiable place-themed districts within the community for agriculture, business and technology, market-place/shopping activities, tourism, entertainment, recreation, food and wine, cultural, and historic resources. 6</p> <p>ED-4.2.2: Support the creation of key cultural spaces to bring visitors to Salinas. 3</p>

Goal ED-5: Coordinate public and private investment along disinvested commercial corridors.

Policy	Related Actions
<p>Policy ED-5.1: Improve the appearance, accessibility and cleanliness of the city and its commercial corridors.</p> <p>9 votes</p>	<p>ED-5.1.1: Establish a consistent corridor maintenance program and tailored design guidelines to improve appearance, create district identity, and Increase safety. 8</p> <p>ED-5.1.2: Incentivize owners and merchants to invest in property maintenance and improvements. The City will also evaluate potential revenue streams to support consistent corridor maintenance. 13</p> <p>ED 5.1.3: Establish and fund a façade improvement program that incentives alignment with City design guidelines/district identity (e.g. 50/50, Jazz Up programs). 7</p> <p>ED 5.1.4: Support business owners with navigating code issues and assist to ensure compliance. 3</p> <p>ED 5.1.5: Facilitate ADA compliance and streamline process by offering ADA checklist, info packet, and trainings. 5</p> <p>ED 5.1.6: Explore grants to facilitate ADA upgrades and compliance. 5</p>