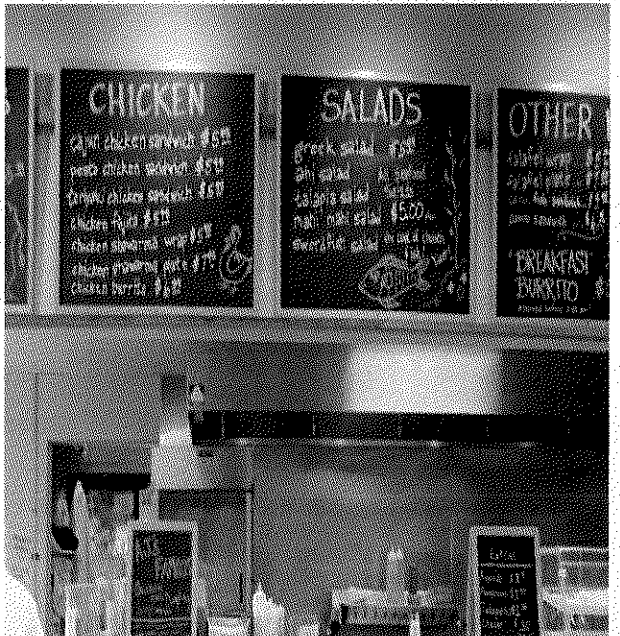


Economic Development Vision and Strategy
Santa Cruz County 2014



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Overview of the Economic Development Vision and Strategy

The Santa Cruz County Economic Development Vision and Strategy (EDVS) presents a Preliminary Economic Vitality **Vision**, along with priority **Strategies** and **Action** items from the recently prepared Economic Vitality Study, which would be the focus of County of Santa Cruz economic development efforts in 2015 and 2016.

Core Values: Sustainability and Community Investment

Because it has been well over twenty years since the last County economic development strategy was created, the process leading to presentation of this EDVS included consultant analysis of economic conditions and trends, as well as an extensive series of public outreach efforts and stakeholder input meetings associated with the Economic Vitality Study (EVS) process conducted during 2013/14. The EVS revealed important perspectives that are widely shared, as well as items that attract less attention but are also worthy of consideration. It is safe to conclude that nearly EVS participants believed that there are strategies and actions that the County could pursue that would improve not only business climate and job growth in the County, but also community quality of life. The EVS led to preparation of this EDVS, which focuses on key priorities for the County of Santa Cruz for the next two years.

It is important to recognize, and indeed celebrate, certain core community values that exist in Santa Cruz County. Unlike many other regions in California, Santa Cruz County has worked for decades to balance growth and development with local values of natural resource preservation and sustainability. This Strategy was developed with these key core values in mind, while also taking a 21st century forward-looking view. As a result, the process emphasized economic opportunities that can strengthen and preserve the County's key assets, including a high quality of life, an emphasis on environmental conservation and restoration, and a mindfulness of the importance of equity for all County residents.

One of the key values that emerged through the public input process conducted during Strategy formulation was the idea of renewed interest in "investment" in the future of Santa Cruz County. The Great Recession of 2008-2011 has taken a great toll on local residents and businesses, resulting in substantial job losses. This event, among other factors, has energized local stakeholders and elected officials to come together, revisit Santa Cruz County's economic strengths and opportunities, and re-dedicate the region's commitment to sustainable economic approaches that emphasize long-term, value-added investment.

Important contributions to this EDVS came not only through the EVS process, but also through the Sustainable Santa Cruz County (SSCC) planning effort that was initiated prior to the EVS and continued through the same timeframe as the EVS, with both efforts concluding at about the same time. There is a complementary relationship between both efforts, as a key component of

community sustainability is economic sustainability. In that “economics” affects all aspects of household and community life, the Vision and Guiding Principles developed through the SSCC process are also relevant to this EDVS.

Presentation of Key EDVS Priorities

This Economic Development Vision and Strategy presents the “Vision and Guiding Principles” approved by the Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors through the Sustainable Santa Cruz County process, as a point of departure for future development of an Economic Vision through a stakeholder process suggested by this EDVS. This EDVS also presents selected priority strategies and action items from the Economic Vitality Study, which would guide the work efforts of the County of Santa Cruz economic development program over the next two years.

The strategies and actions are organized by the seven key goals identified through the process of preparing the Economic Vitality Study:

Goal 1: Create a Shared Vision and Organize for Action

Goal 2: Support Sustainable Development with Housing and Transportation Choices

Goal 3: Strengthen Key Economic Sectors: Agriculture, Health, Education, and Leisure/Hospitality

Goal 4: Support Small Business, Technology/Innovation, and the Arts

Goal 5: Expand Public Sector Capacity and Infrastructure

Goal 6: Revitalize and Strengthen Town Centers and Commercial Areas

Goal 7: Promote Santa Cruz County to Regional, State, National, and Global Markets

