



**TOWN OF WINDSOR**  
*2040 General Plan*

# **Stakeholder Interviews Summary**

May 27 through May 29, 2014

Prepared for the  
Town of Windsor by  
Mintier Harnish

July 23, 2014



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# Contents

<b>Section 1: Introduction and Purpose.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Section 2: The General Plan Update.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Stakeholder Interview Process.....	2
<b>Section 3: Stakeholder Interviews Summary.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Family-oriented Community.....	2
Housing Mix and Affordability.....	4
Downtown Green Development .....	5
Development within the Urban Growth Boundary .....	7
Growth Management Ordinance and Merit-based System.....	10
Tourism and Economic Growth .....	11
Windsor Unified School District.....	16
Other Issues.....	18
<b>Attachment A: Stakeholder Interviews Participants.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Attachment B: Stakeholder Interview Questions.....</b>	<b>22</b>



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## **Section 1: Introduction and Purpose**

On May 27 through 29, 2014, the Town of Windsor General Plan Update Consultants conducted interviews with key community leaders and stakeholders to gather feedback on key issues and opportunities that should be addressed during the General Plan Update process. The interviews included 32 participants, including elected officials, Town staff, representatives from major institutions and organizations (e.g., Windsor Unified School District, Windsor Chamber of Commerce), business-owners, development interests and real estate agents, and others. The input provided during these interviews will help the consultants and Town staff focus on key issues and priorities that are important to Windsor's present and future. This document will serve as a reference for the Town Council, Planning Commission, Town staff, the consultants, and others involved in the Update process.

This Summary is organized into three main sections. Section 1, Introduction introduces the Summary and provides an overview of its organization. Section 2, The General Plan Update summarizes the General Plan Update process and where we are in the schedule. Finally, Section 3, Stakeholder Interview Summary and Observations summarizes the key ideas and concerns that emerged from these interviews. Quotations from the interviews are included to highlight key ideas, issues, and suggestions. The following provides a brief summary of the themes that emerged from the interviews. Details of these themes as well as the Consultants' observations can be found in Section 3.

## **Section 2: The General Plan Update**

In April 2014 the Town began a process to update the General Plan. The objective is to have the Town Council adopt the General Plan in spring 2016. The General Plan is a long-range planning document that will serve as the "constitution" for future development. It will set forth the community's goals and aspirations for the next 25 years.

The first step in this process was to begin discussing issues and concerns to be addressed in the General Plan Update, collecting information from interviews with community leaders and stakeholders, and preparing updates to existing conditions information contained in the General Plan. Town staff, the Town Council, and the Planning Commission received an overview of the process and provided the Consultants with information on key community issues and future opportunities.

The major steps in the General Plan process are as follows:

- Update Background Data (Spring/Summer 2014)
- Identify Issues and Opportunities and Confirm Vision (Summer/Fall 2014)
- Focus Area Alternatives (Winter 2015)
- Focused General Plan Review and Revision (Spring/Summer 2015)
- Environmental Review (Summer/Fall 2015)
- Final Documents and Adoption (Fall 2015 to Winter 2016)



## Stakeholder Interview Process

Interviews with community leaders and stakeholders were held Tuesday, May 27<sup>th</sup> through Thursday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in Windsor Town Hall. Some interviews were one-on-one, while others included groups of individuals with similar interests. In total, 17 interview sessions with 32 participants were conducted. Each session was facilitated by the Consultants. A list of those who participated in the interviews is provided in Appendix A.

During each interview session, participants were provided with a list of questions and asked to provide their views on several aspects of Windsor. Actual questions asked and time spent in each topic varied according to the specific concerns and the background of each participant. It is important to note that the interview sessions were conducted in confidence in order to facilitate candid discussions. This Summary does not attribute any issue, idea, or comment to any individual. This document summarizes the input provided during the interviews in order to identify common themes.

## Section 3: Stakeholder Interviews Summary

The following section presents common themes that emerged from the interviews. Each person interviewed talked about why they live or work in Windsor, the Town's assets and best features, what things could be improved, and their perceptions of Windsor's best opportunities for growth and change. The results of these conversations fell into eight topics: family-oriented community; housing mix and affordability; Downtown and the "Town Green;" the urban growth boundary; the Growth Management Ordinance; economic growth and tourism; the Windsor Unified School District; and other issues. The comments include concerns, suggestions, and aspirations for the General Plan Update and the present and future of Windsor. Alongside each theme are specific quotes taken from conversations with interviewees that highlight aspects of each theme.

### Family-oriented Community

We found broad agreement that Windsor's foremost asset is that it is a family-oriented community. Nearly everyone interviewed talked about the town in terms of its family friendliness. The events on the Town Green, the many parks, great hiking, the culture, and the schools all contribute to the family-oriented character of Windsor.

In the early years of town development, the homes were relatively inexpensive and sized for families. Many people moved to Windsor because of the affordable homes. They have stayed because of the quality of the schools, the family-oriented atmosphere, and sense of community. Because the community is relatively new, people who have moved to town have been able to make the community the place they want it to be. The crime rate is low. Children are engaged in many school and community activities. There is clearly a strong sense of community. People are proud to

*"The Town is great. It's family friendly and small. People like living here. We'd like to see Windsor stay relatively small."*



say they are from Windsor. The Town Council and Planning Commission are a strong part of that sense of community and approach policy- and decision-making with that in mind.

One person described Windsor as a blue collar town. It has a good feel. It has a lot of people involved who want to make Windsor better and make something of the Town. They volunteer to do something. They are people who want to make the community better for their kids and grandkids. Examples of community groups that facilitate volunteer opportunities include the Downtown merchants, Raven Theater, Senior Center Pool, and the Parks Foundation. At the same time, as a blue collar town, people don't have a lot of spare time; they are busy with their families and don't attend government meetings very often.

*"We are proud that despite the odds, conflicts, and consultants, we've managed to create a place that is walkable. We're a working class, plaza-center town. We're trying to have a sense of place. Our teenagers miss hanging out at the Town Green when they leave. It's great that Windsor has that social feature for the youth."*

A number of people mentioned the neighboring communities of Healdsburg, Rohnert Park, and Santa Rosa when describing what they liked about Windsor. Some said that Windsor feels different and has a better feel than Santa Rosa and Healdsburg. People frequently said they did not want Windsor to be another Healdsburg, but instead be

its own distinctive place (although at least one person hoped that, "Windsor would become a more affluent community, similar to Healdsburg"). The negatives assigned to Healdsburg generally related to its lack of affordability and excessive tourism. However, Healdsburg was also looked to by a number of people as being much more economically successful than Windsor. One person said there is an unstated feeling of competition with Healdsburg; however, Windsor needs to have its own identity and vision. Everyone who mentioned Rohnert Park described it as the type of community they wanted to avoid becoming.

It is clear that people in the community are happy with Windsor and do not see a lot of need for significant change. However, the Town does have an important challenge in maintaining the family-oriented nature of the community. When the Town was young, housing was plentiful and affordable for young families. Today, housing is scarce and increasingly unaffordable. The young families who moved to Windsor 20 years ago, and continue to live in Windsor, are no longer young families. No new homes for young families have been built in Windsor for a number of years and very few existing homes are for sale. Lacking an availability of housing affordable to younger families, the Town character that so many people love may significantly change to something different over time.



People also had some suggestions for improvements and refinement that emphasize Windsor's family orientation. Several people suggested that the events on the Town Green should be broadened to add more events and to be more culturally diverse. More nighttime events were also suggested. A few people said that some people view the gathering of teens in the Downtown as a nuisance. Another area of concern related to limited number of people actually engaged in the decision-making process. Several people observed that the energy for the Town has come largely from the Town decision-makers and staff. There is a need for a broader group of community members and organizations to organize and sponsor events and programs. One person suggested that "people haven't lived here long enough to donate money to get things going."

*"Windsor needs to find its own "wow" factor, distinct from Healdsburg-what is Windsor's "brand" that will continue to attract visitors and residents?"*

### Housing Mix and Affordability

Several themes emerged and a wide range of opinions were expressed related to housing type, affordability, availability, and target market. Windsor has a great regional location and is close to many different types of activities and attractions. One person observed that traditionally Windsor was considered too far to be a commuter town, but it is becoming more so as those working further south look to live in wine country. Second homes and vacation rental investments probably aren't a big market in Windsor. Several people thought that most people looking to purchase a home are families wanting to live in the Town. A few people thought that Windsor has good housing prices.

*"We need a mix of single family homes, but also need townhomes and apartments. We need growth, but not sprawl."*

Some people feel that Windsor has done a good job of providing a balance of housing and that there is a good progression of housing opportunities. There is an interesting dichotomy around single family units and the allure of the Downtown mixed-use. It's been

successful in the way the Downtown was developed. Young people like the Downtown feel. They like living Downtown. However, others felt there are unmet housing needs. They thought, for example, that there is a lack of rental housing. One person noted that Bell Village will provide additional rentals, but more are needed.

The stakeholders had very interesting observations about current housing availability and costs. According to one person interviewed, at the end of May 2014, there were only 21 homes for sale in Windsor, which represented a less than one month supply of housing. In large part because of the lack of supply, people are being priced out of the Windsor housing market. The lowest priced house today in Windsor is \$345,000. Two years ago prices were in the range of \$200,000. Homes two years ago in the \$300,000 range are



now over \$500,000 today. Today there are multiple offers when homes are listed, and prices are going at asking price or higher. First-time home buyers, single and older individuals, retiring folks looking to downsize, young adults who grew up here are being priced out of the housing market. Those who were waiting to buy are finding that now it's too late. Others echoed this concern: there needs to be more housing built in Windsor. One person observed that there is a favorable sentiment for slow growth, but the Town needs growth in order to sustain services and the schools.

A number of stakeholders said that people want to live in Windsor. People may start with an apartment or condo, but once they have a family they need a house with more room. Several people said that Windsor needs housing that supports a multi-generational population. Windsor needs to help create innovative places for the younger generations, such as lofts or live/work space. Some people pointed out that Windsor also lacks high end homes. People who are making more money and seeking luxury homes have to look outside Windsor to find them. And, in order for Windsor to attract good, high paying jobs, higher-end housing is needed to attract employers. The Town needs some large lot developments with high end homes (e.g. housing among vineyards).

*“You can't put a dome over the town.”*

*“We don't need to increase the population to get what we want.”*

One person observed that Windsor is a family town and expressed concerned about out-of-town developers building large apartments. However, the same person was fine with condos and townhomes owned and rented by locals. On the other hand one developer suggested the Town would benefit from having some areas that support high density of 100+ units per acre in the future (4-5 years). They suggested that Windsor needs an upper end product at higher density and that the town should have some projects that are 50+ feet in height. This would support a more affluent population and provide higher rents, more tax revenue, and better in-community spending.

Finally, some people thought that affordable senior housing is something that should be considered. The Town is seeing an increase in seniors and disabled residents and there is a need to provide more equal access/accessibility in projects (universal design/ADA compliance).

### **Town Green Development**

The Town Green is the pride of Windsor. It is focal point for the civic center and the primary social gathering place in the Town. Development of the Green is pointed to with pride by many of the people interviewed. The community events held on the Town Green, including concerts on the Green, movie night, and the farmers market, attract both residents and visitors from neighboring communities and beyond. The Green is considered by many to be the most important community asset after the family-friendly



atmosphere. In fact, the activities on the Green are an important part of making Windsor so family oriented.

However, while there is universal support for the Town Green, it is clear there is more that can be done to make it and Downtown complete. During the stakeholder interviews, people raised four key issues that need to be addressed to make Downtown complete: redevelop the north and east sides of the Green; attract larger anchor uses, including a hotel; resolve the lack of parking; and broaden and expand the events on the Green.

*“Windsor used to be a much less active community; the Town Center, the Town Green, and the events on the Green activated the Town.”*

Several people observed that the Green would function better if it was surrounded by three or four sides of development. That development could include a boutique hotel which would also serve as a major anchor tenant. Some suggested that the Town remove the Huerta Center and incorporate the library as part of a larger development. Others point out that the police have outgrown their facilities and the Town is looking for ways to reassess the long-term future of the Civic Center (e.g., create a single building). Also, the library is undersized.

One person said that Town hall is a dead zone on the Green and the area could be more effectively used; the library should stay, but it could be redeveloped to complement Downtown. The Town could also donate the land on the third side to lower the costs and facilitate the hotel.

*“Finishing Downtown is really important...we need to get to the third side of the green.”*

A lot of discussion focused on the need to attract larger anchor tenants to Downtown that would generate more retail activity and tourism. While there are a number of viable businesses Downtown, such as the candy store, it is generally agreed

that there are no major businesses which could be considered anchor tenants. When the Green was built, many people purchased properties Downtown. However, the spaces are too small. Downtown has been challenged due to the size of available space, and planned to only site restaurants on corner lots.

People are not coming to Windsor to shop at smaller boutique shops. There isn't enough foot traffic. A number of interviewees felt that there is a need to build developments that will attract more people into Downtown, such as a grocery store, a large fitness center, or hotel. Many people are looking forward to the development of Oliver's Market to help fill this void. Most agreed that Downtown needs a high end boutique hotel. Some thought mixed use (office/retail), live/work space, and higher densities, including four story buildings would also be beneficial.



One challenging issue raised by an interviewee is that the existing buildings Downtown lack elevators, but all residential units are at least on the second story. Elevators in the buildings would open the market to a broader range of people, such as seniors.

*“Parking is a huge problem Downtown...without some solution, the lack of parking will limit the success of Downtown.”*

Clearly parking Downtown is a problem, especially on days with events on the Green. There is no designated employee or long-term parking. Some viewed this as a critical issue for economic development Downtown. Some of the retail business owners observed

that people aren't willing to come Downtown to shop during events on the Green. Related to the parking issue a few people suggested that revenue from parking tickets could benefit the Town, but regulating parking would require parking enforcement officer.

Finally, several people thought that expanding the number and type of events on the Green would further Downtown economic development. Suggestions included more opportunities for nighttime events on the Green, such as movie night.

### **Development within the Urban Growth Boundary**

As expected, there were a wide range of opinions expressed about future growth and development in Windsor. Comments related to the Downtown are summarized in the previous section. This section describes the thoughts and ideas about growth and development within or beyond the Urban Growth Boundary. Comments specific to the Growth Management Ordinance follow this section. Finally, while this summary includes a separate section about economic development and tourism, much of that discussion also relates back to future growth and development.

The comments about development within the Urban Growth Boundary generally fall into five categories: general observations; Windsor Mill/Bell Village; Special Areas C and D; Town development review process; and infrastructure needs. Because of the broad range of comments and opinions, as well as discussion about specific development areas, this section is organized more as a listing of comments rather than a narrative.

Several people also made observations about the development history and future of Windsor:

- Before it incorporated, Windsor was the only place in Sonoma County where development could happen very quickly and easily.
- The existing General Plan policy for growth and creation of the Downtown were great ideas; implementation however has been sketchy.
- All the projects that were proposed in Windsor before the recession have gone away.



- The financial solvency of the Town is important to ensure the financial certainty for developer investments in new projects.
- Some residents find it difficult to envision growth on the Town edge.
- More growth will mean we need a new high school.
- Is it the current size of Windsor that has made it wonderful? Will more growth change that?
- The reason people go to Sonoma and Healdsburg is because of their size. They're small.
- Urban Growth Boundary is somewhat problematic because it created a misconception of what is feasible.
- The Town will need to grow to support the SMART Train; there will need to be a change in the mindset about the growth boundary.
- The Town does not have good tools and policies to support infill. We need a better approach to make it easier to propose and approve infill developments.
- The Town needs large-lot developments and estate sized housing.
- Development needs to add to the value of Windsor. No development should negatively affect property values.
- There is a strong desire for infill and density, but there needs to be a balance with greenfield growth.
- People agree generally with preserving agriculture and maintaining community separators. But what will our edges look like?

One person articulated a view that seemed to be supported by several others:

*“There is a conflict with community growth versus a sprawling Town. The Urban Growth Boundary is currently too big. The Town is surrounded by open space. If the Town is going to embrace smart growth, it needs to be centered in the Downtown and on the SMART Train station. Growth areas should be looked at, but the General Plan should focus on the priority growth areas identified in 2004 and 2005 (Downtown, Shiloh Road, Arata Lane, Old Redwood Highway). We need to focus on the priority status of those areas. The fringe areas on the east and west are not smart growth. “*

Another observer focused on the Town's recent higher density projects Downtown but reinforced the view held by several others:

*“Windsor has started to build the Downtown and make good progress. We have new projects coming that will [fill] the high density housing needs of the community. In order to maintain the family feel, however, we need to provide more single family detached subdivisions, similar to what we already have. This is a major issue. If we will grow, that growth needs to be the single family*



*subdivisions that include high-end units. People are interested in moving to Windsor, but there is no inventory, which is causing higher prices. There are a lot of small lot subdivisions above six units per acre. We need a balance of larger-lot development to provide a broader range of housing types. We've only really been approving multifamily and higher density project types."*

There is general consensus that the town needs to grow to remain economically viable and a place where people want to live. How much growth, what type of growth, and where that growth should occur remains the subject of a wide range of opinions.

### **Windsor Mill and Bell Village**

The two major pending development projects, Windsor Mill and Bell Village, are broadly supported by those who mentioned them. Many people are looking forward to the developments getting under way. They are both viewed as progress toward making the Downtown more vital and providing much needed housing. Oliver's Market was frequently mentioned with great anticipation. Some people expressed frustration that the projects were not further along and disappointed that construction had not yet begun.

### **Area C**

A few people, primarily Area C representatives, discussed the potential development of Area C. Discussion of Area C centered on the feasibility of current General Plan land use designations and whether some of the specificity in the General Plan should be more generalized. One suggestion was to retain the vision for the area but rely on a Specific Plan to provide the details.

### **Area D**

Many people expressed an opinion about Area D. Among the several observations was that Area D hasn't developed because of its size, infrastructure improvement costs, and multiple ownerships. Financing infrastructure to the area is a challenge unless the entire area is approved for development. A few people suggested that Area D should be divided into sub areas to improve potential for development. One person observed that the Town doesn't have parcels for ½ acre estate homes and that Area D would be ideal for this type of development.

*"Do special areas even make sense anymore?"*

On the other hand, some people felt that there is plenty of land available for development to the north of town to meet demand and that development of Area D is premature. One observer said:

*"Without growth and change the Town will die. The Town is largely hemmed in on the south and west, although some industrial growth could be added south of Shiloh Road. The only way the town can grow is to the north and east."*

Finally, yet another person talked at length about the need for growth to support the economic health of the Town:



*“For five years nothing has happened in Windsor. One of the challenges the General Plan will face is the community’s views about growth. Windsor had a lot of growth in a certain time period that provided a base for economic development to support incorporation. Town officials need to understand that you need housing in order to stay economically healthy. Windsor is going to have a high number of non-family households unless more housing opportunities are provided.”*

### **The Town’s Development Review Process**

A number of people, primarily representing the business and development communities and Town officials, talked about the Town’s development review process and development fees. For some, there was a feeling that Windsor needs to be more developer-friendly, particularly for those projects that are consistent with the General Plan and the community vision. The administrative process was viewed by some as cumbersome, including unnecessary meetings.

*“The application processing time is too long, the fees are too high, and the process is too cumbersome. This has been true since the 1990s. It’s gotten better, but not a lot.”*

Some also thought that the Planning Commission is not being used the way they are supposed to, that the Town Council should be providing conceptual input while the Commission provides the detailed review and input. The Town needs to move projects through the development review process more efficiently, relying on

the General Plan and Specific Plans. One person said that the Town needs to take initiative to make development applications easier to move through the public review process. They were critical of the Planning Commission for not giving good direction and forcing developers to redo plans over and over again.

Application and permit fees were also a subject of discussion. Some thought the pre-recession fees and permit process didn’t make sense, but the Town has recently become more developer friendly. On the other hand, others said that development fees are too high.

### **Growth Management Ordinance and Merit-based System**

Not a single stakeholder interviewed thought the Growth Management Ordinance and Merit-based System was working. Everyone who discussed the Ordinance and accompanying review process thought it was time to address

*“The Merit process doesn’t really work.”*



how to improve it; a few people suggested it be discarded. None of the discussions addressed specific changes—rather the focus was on the problems. The following is a list of the key observations:

- The current system forces applicants to offer more than what is feasible just to win the “beauty contest,” then work back to what is feasible.
- The ordinance brings ideas to the Council to early, but then the Planning Commission changes the plan after an application has been submitted. It would be better to have the Planning Commission made part of the process earlier. The Council is providing premature approvals without Planning Commission involvement.
- The growth allocation system needs to allow for a broader commitment with phasing to get the entire allocation in order to finance infrastructure.
- What are the offsite infrastructure obligations and how do they fit in the allocation system?
- The Ordinance isn’t working on either side. It’s awkward and cumbersome. It is too subjective.
- The Merit process is not good. It is needed, but it needs to work better. It is simply a showcase.
- The Merit System makes it very expensive for developers to propose projects. We need a clear prioritization and phasing plan for developers. There must be uniformity.
- The Merit Process needs to include a factor on financial feasibility. The system today would require an apartment complex to be phased, which isn’t the way things are done. It requires phasing for projects without the certainty that is required to get financing.
- The Merit Process is challenging because a lot of the Council members were planning commissioners and they are into planning. Developers have historically not liked Windsor because of the Merit Process and the Planning Commission.

It is clear that if the updated General Plan addresses future town growth and change in a comprehensive manner, the Growth Management Ordinance must be included in the update process. The Ordinance and the merit system must be included in discussions related to growth policy and implementation programs.

### **Tourism and Economic Growth**

After the subject of Windsor’s family-friendly nature, the most discussed topic during the stakeholder interviews was economic growth and tourism. There is a widely held view that Windsor has great untapped potential for economic growth and vitality that is linked to the surrounding wine region and tourism. While much of that discussion focused on increasing tourism by taking advantage of Windsor’s location in the world famous Sonoma wine country, several other topics received a lot of attention, including the



Town's role in economic development, the Chamber of Commerce, retail sales leakage, Downtown development, and job growth.

A few general observations set the tone for the stakeholder discussions.

- As with the rest of the Country, the recession affected a lot of development and economic growth in the community.
- We have to find effective ways to bounce back. Windsor needs to build business vibrancy.
- We need to think more strategically and make intelligent development decisions based on sound planning that is also somewhat visionary.
- Other communities are beginning to get a lot of investment, such as the Barlow project in Sebastopol; we need to find out why that project didn't come to Windsor.
- There is an almost universal feeling that economic growth should be tied to the wine and agricultural industry, for tourism, for retail sales, and for jobs.

### Tourism

Many stakeholders observed that most tourists coming to the Sonoma region pass through Windsor. Many noted that the Town is at the epicenter of wine tourism and that it needs to build upon its central location. Windsor needs to capitalize on the wine industry. Windsor needs something that attracts more people, possibly more tasting rooms. A few people observed that other nearby cities, such as Healdsburg and Sonoma, have an abundance of tourism-related businesses; Windsor should be able to capture some of that business. One person observed that most of the retail businesses in Windsor today rely on local and regional customers, but not a lot from tourism. Another suggested that airport expansion will bring in additional airlines and bring more tourists into the area.

*“Connect the Town to the surrounding agriculture. Connect restaurants to farms. Connect tourists to the Town”.*

A common theme in the discussion of tourism is that Sonoma County is one of the top wine regions in the world and Windsor needs to take advantage of its central location in “wine country.” The need for a boutique hotel on the Town Green is viewed by some as

key component in getting more wine tasting rooms and wine tourists Downtown.

*“Wine tourists expect to spend a lot of money and we should expect them to spend some of it in Windsor.”*

One person wondered why Windsor isn't capturing the same economic growth as Healdsburg and suggested that the reason



people go Healdsburg is because it represents Sonoma County wine country recreation. In order for Windsor to capture similar growth, it was suggested that Windsor needs to make sure it clearly fits into the Sonoma County wine country; we need to market Windsor for what its assets area (e.g., Russian River Valley location, Pinot wine) and to get businesses here that support that growth.

However, a few people interviewed expressed a different view about tourism in general and wine tourism specifically. Some suggested that Windsor isn't really in the center of the wine-region and that the community needs to sell the town on other attractions. Another person expressed the view that wine tourism could be considered inconsistent with the family-oriented reputation of Windsor. Someone else noted that the water park used to be a great draw and something like that could once again attract tourists.

*"We need to find a balance between wineries and grapes and families."*

*"We need to find our own niche. The events are good draws (e.g. hot air balloons, air show, bike races), but we need something that keeps people in town."*

Finally, one stakeholder felt that the gateways into Windsor are very important and that it would be good to have more attractive entrances to the Town. The Town could do better job at showcasing local character, identity, and features.

### **Town Support for Economic Development**

The stakeholders expressed a wide range of opinion about the Town's role in and commitment to the economic growth of the community. It was clear from talking with town representatives (elected, appointed, and staff) that a top priority of the Town is increasing the economic vitality of the community. However, a number of people interviewed from the business community felt the Town isn't doing enough.

The Town adopted the Windsor Economic Strategic Plan in 2008, just before the Great Recession. Many felt that was a good plan, but there hasn't been a lot of implementation. Many of the action programs required funding that hasn't been available. Some observed that the loss of redevelopment also negatively affected much of the Plan implementation.

Several people discussed the Economic Development Task Force, which the Town supports with staff participation. The Chamber of Commerce created and appointed serving members to the Task Force in 2012. The Task Force also includes a steering committee on which the Town participates. These groups represent a close relationship between the Town and business community; however, much work is still needed to make these efforts effective and successful, and some seek a stronger and mutually supportive Chamber-Town partnership. The Task Force generates a lot of good ideas, but there is a lack of resources to implement the ideas.



Some of the stakeholders interviewed were critical of the Town because they felt the Town was not doing enough to support economic development in Windsor. They felt the Town has lacked an emphasis on economic development; there has been a lot of discussion, but not a lot of action or investment (e.g., advertising). A few people thought Town staff turnover has contributed to this issue. Others thought the Town Council has not provided enough economic development leadership, that they emphasize the “green” environmental part of the Windsor, but not the economic part.

*“The Town is too focused on cutting costs versus growing the economy. There needs to be a greater emphasis on solutions and strategies to increase revenues.”*

Several stakeholders felt that the Town needs to make a major commitment to economic development, jobs, tourism, local business, and town growth. A few people suggested that the

Town needs someone on staff responsible for marketing the Town, a Windsor advocate, to promote and advertized Windsor, with the objective of attracting people to move here, open a business here, or visit here. They thought that businesses are trying to work together, but the Town isn’t involved enough.

### Chamber of Commerce

A number of stakeholders discussed the role of the Chamber of Commerce in economic development. There was general agreement that since the recession, the Chamber has struggled to be an effective voice in the community. The Chamber lost many members during the recession and hasn’t regained the business support it once had. As a result, several people felt the Chamber has had limited effectiveness as a business advocate. One person thought while the main goal of the Chamber should be how to get people to spend money throughout the Town, it hasn’t done that, resulting in less business and Town investment in the Chamber. There seems to be of a lack of unity at the business/chamber level.

Some people feel the Chamber has a good relationship with the Town; others suggested that there is a disconnect between local businesses, the Chamber, and the Town. There was general agreement that the Chamber doesn’t have adequate funding. Some people were critical of the Town for not providing the Chamber greater funding. Others point to the Chamber’s lack of membership from the types of businesses that will provide the funding needed for effective marketing.

*“The Chamber has a lot of ideas, but the Town is expected to fund those ideas and do the heavy lifting.”*

### Retail

There was general agreement among a number of stakeholders that Windsor has a lot of retail sales leakage and that this is an important economic issue that needs to be



addressed during the General Plan Update. Several reasons for the leakage were offered during the interviews: Lakewood Shopping Center vacancies; Downtown has no anchor tenant and there isn't any space large enough to provide for an anchor; Downtown doesn't have a good variety of space; there is too much turnover in businesses and businesses are relocating; there are no clothing stores.

Some stakeholders expressed concern about the Lakewood Shopping Center vacancies. There is general frustration with the landlord's business practices. The owners don't work well with local businesses. They'd rather have vacancies than work with tenants. It's said that Peet's Coffee & Tea was driven out of the center by the Lakewood Shopping Center owners. It was clear from the interviews that the Town would like the owner of one of its largest shopping centers to reach out and work with the Town to address vacancies and tenant issues, but that hasn't been the case so far. Retention of businesses Downtown was also a concern of some.

*"Most residents are not shopping locally. There is a lot of sales leakage"*

*"There isn't a consistent plan to keep residents in Windsor, shopping in Windsor. There isn't anything to keep it all together."*

### Downtown

Downtown continues to be viewed by most people interviewed as the center of visitor and economic activity in Windsor. A successful Downtown is essential to the economic success of the Town. However, as evident from the many comments about the Town Green and tourism, the Town Green events and other community events don't really bring in much business, but they do give the image that Windsor is a fun and exciting place. One person talked about a study of Downtown businesses conducted by a high school student that found that the events on the Green didn't bring in additional business. However, most agreed that restaurants are the exception because people have to eat. Valet food service offered by Town Green restaurants to concert goers on the Green has provided an opportunity to capture some revenue, but the restaurants have had to get creative (e.g., delivering food to people on the Green). Retailers generally do less

business during events on the Green.

*"For Downtown businesses, the events on the Green are what you make of them."*

Most people talked about the need for a hotel Downtown. The Town recently conducted a Downtown hotel study aimed at gauging the feasibility of a

boutique hotel with higher than average room rates. The study found the Town wasn't positioned to capture a high-end hotel without significant Town investment. A hotel is viewed by most people as a key to the economic revitalization of Downtown. Other



suggestions for revitalizing Downtown included more wine tasting rooms and major anchor tenants, such as Oliver's Market. Finally one person interviewed talked about the potential for a renovated Oddfellows Hall to provide rental space for Downtown events.

### Job Growth

Few people interviewed talked about attracting new jobs to Windsor. Most felt that Windsor has historically been a bedroom community and that people go elsewhere to work. There aren't any major employers in Windsor; the existing business areas are relatively small and cater to smaller businesses. Some suggested that a lot of people in Town work out of their homes. One person interviewed said there is a lot of interest in industrial uses that serve the wine industry, but the Town hasn't supported that in the past because it doesn't provide enough jobs or the right kinds of jobs. Another person felt that the Town hasn't done anything to attract jobs. Yet a third person felt the Chamber wasn't doing enough to attract new businesses.

*"Town needs to be nimble and be responsive to the market, such as services to the wine industry. Including the airport area, Windsor is actually jobs-rich."*

*"There is significant wine-related revenue coming into the region and the town needs to find ways to capture some of it."*

No work has been done to survey business needs/demands. Windsor needs a better draw, but we need to know what the draw is. There aren't any active efforts to recruit new businesses.

As far as future job growth, there was general agreement that the area in and around Shiloh Road offers the greatest opportunities. Other areas discussed included Conde Lane, Olufs property (just

west of the freeway, north of Shiloh Road), and the airport. A few people specifically mentioned Ygrene as having good potential in the Arata Lane area. Ygrene is a national company that provides building retrofits for energy efficiency.

Finally, a number of people talked generally about the job potential related to the wine industry. There are a lot of jobs surrounding Windsor from the wine industry. The Town recently streamlined permitting for wineries. One person discussed to potential for bringing a culinary-related business to Windsor as a good fit with the wine industry.

### Windsor Unified School District

Many people interviewed spoke about the Windsor Unified School District and its relationship to the Town. There was broad agreement that the District was well managed and doing a great job educating Town students. Many people talked about the schools as one reason they moved to Windsor and indicated the schools are part of why the Town is family-oriented. Beyond this general support for the District, there were a number of comments, both pro and con, on several school-related topics, including traffic impacts



related to the “Oklahoma Model” (clustered grade level) system, coordination with the Town regarding facilities planning, joint facility use, and specific school locations.

The “Oklahoma Model” (clustered grade level) system has been used by the District for many years. Instead of the several traditional K-6 elementary schools, the district organizes the elementary schools by K-2, 3-4, and 5-6. All K-2 students in the Town attend a single school. All 3-4 students attend a different school, and so forth. There are strong opinions about this system, both for and against. Supporters of the system tout the advantages of grouping students of similar ages on a single campus, as well as bringing students together from across the entire Town. The primary criticism of the system is that parents with several children in the District spend a significant amount of time driving between multiple schools. A number of people observed that the driving between schools also results in major traffic congestion, long traffic queues, parking in red zones, and air quality impacts. While the District provides some bus service, the service needs expansion and improvement. Most agree that there hasn’t been good coordination between the Town and School District.

*“District budget issues and the Town design have caused significant transportation issues. Without a District transit program, a neighborhood school system may need to be used. Not having transportation among schools particularly impacts low income communities and residents.”*

A number of people discussed the lack of coordination between the District and Town related to the location of future schools. Most would like to see the Town work with the School District to better plan the locations of new schools. Some people blame the District for this lack of coordination, others blame the Town.

*“Town and District haven’t gotten along. The District hasn’t done a good job working with the Town and involving the public when siting schools-the District basically fends for itself.”*

One person suggested that schools should be planned consistently with the Town’s expectations for conservation and that the Town could provide expertise in how to design schools around conservation.

One topic on which people generally agreed was the joint use of District and Town facilities. Stakeholders viewed this as a great use of community resources and supported opportunities to expand facility joint use. Both District and Town stakeholders indicated an interest in working to more clearly outline and organize joint use facilities for parks, auditoriums, and recreation facilities and that both organizations could benefit from sharing resources and staff for facility maintenance.



There was discussion by some people interviewed about future school sites. The following are a listing of those comments:

- In the long-term the District will need another school; all schools are currently impacted.
- The high school has no room to grow because of the size of the school site. This space issue could be alleviated by using adjacent parks or Town property.
- Windsor Creek is a great location for a school, but the surrounding development makes it difficult to access.
- Windsor Creek is a good location for long-term alternative education and offices.
- The next new school should be a charter or trade school centered on a specific concept (e.g., green industries, ecological emphasis).
- A new school should provide an opportunity for joint uses.
- If and when the Town approves new housing, a new school will be needed.
- The District is looking at locations for development of a new school. The District should balance school population on the east/west side of the Town. Currently it is a little heavy on the west side. The question is what type of campus a new school would be (e.g., K-8, Charter, something else). The school should be adjacent to a park with recreation facilities to use funds effectively.
- The District and Town need to work together to fund facilities that provide benefits to both the schools and the Town

“Bike lanes are an issue regarding safety. Crossing 101 is not easy or safe. Need better, safer routes to allow kids to ride to school. Need better bike lanes marked along roads leading to schools.”

### **Other Issues**

There were several topics relevant to the General Plan Update that only a handful of people addressed. These topics include the Lytton Tribe development interests, the East/West divide, seniors and the elderly and public infrastructure. Unlike the other topics discussed above, these topics are described as a narrative. The narrative reflects the comments of a few people interviewed, not the opinion of the interviewers.

#### ***Lytton Tribe Development***

The Lytton Tribe (Tribe) wants to establish their homeland on the Town’s western boundary. Most of the vacant land on the west side of town within the Urban Growth Boundary is held by the Tribe and is no longer available to meet the town’s housing demand. The Tribe is willing to outbid anyone to obtain additional property. Their plan is to provide homes to anyone who is a member of the Tribe. The Tribe won’t sell homes or subdivide the property; they will retain the property and lease it to their members.



The Town and Tribe generally have a good relationship. Tribe originally considered installing their own sewer treatment plant adjacent to the town. The Town had an agreement with the Tribe in 2008 to fund staff time for negotiations and studies to provide water, sewer, and other service extensions. The Town submitted comments on plans in 2009. The Tribe has preliminarily offered a community swimming pool as a potential community benefit, which could be integrated as part of a ballot initiative requiring majority Windsor voter approval to allow the Tribe to connect to Town water and sewer utilities. A vote of the electorate is required since the utility extension is outside of the Town's Urban Growth Boundary. The Tribe wants to be a good neighbor and be accepted by the community. The Tribe has a vision for a larger area further west of Windsor that might include a wine/resort center that would be located away from the Town and self-served with sewer and water.

The Tribe development on the west side is a major concern for some residents. The concerns include the impact of the development on the Town's resources (e.g., sewer, water, roads) and whether they intend to build a casino. There is also concern about the Tribe purchasing a lot of land within the Town Limits, adjacent to their property in the county. While the Tribe is viewed with suspicion by some residents, others would like to have a partnership with the Tribe.

### ***East/West Divide***

Highway 101 divides the Town both physically and socially. There are no good connections between east and west Windsor. The Town is fragmented. It is difficult to walk from one side of Town to the other. Businesses on the east side of town need to be kept in the mix. Eastside shopping centers shouldn't be neglected.

There is a history of cultural divide between the wealthier east side and the west side which has the Latino neighborhoods. How are we as a community going to address the issue of equity relative to investments, infrastructure, place, and deliver services? There aren't a lot of venues for young people in the community on the west side.

### ***Seniors and the Elderly***

We need an environment and community that allows community members to age in place as long as possible. The Town needs to address the issues of mobility, isolation, housing, and health. Financial independence and security is a major factor. Social involvement is another factor that is affected by mobility and health. Many seniors live in mobile home parks.

### ***Public Infrastructure***

**Fire Protection.** Fire protection is funded through property tax and two special taxes, Measures P and K. The Town is a great partner with many projects, but not in regards to long-term sustainable funding for fire service. Development fees provide for additional infrastructure and equipment; however they do not provide funding for maintenance and replacement of existing equipment.



**Street design.** Smaller street sizes require an adjustment for people. Car speeds are perceived to be higher than they really are. The Town and developers need to be aware of public safety when designing new development projects. Town planners need to understand the equipment needs for fire safety related to project design. Narrow streets, dead-end streets, higher density development all pose challenges. The Town needs to work with the Fire Department and waste removal companies to ensure trucks and equipment can access development.

Intersections are getting impacted. We need solutions to keep traffic flowing. Roundabouts may be a solution, but the design is important. Problem example: onramp to 101 from Old Redwood Highway, which will only get worse with Bell Village.

**Law Enforcement.** Development plan review should include police input. The Town's staff review committee is very effective in reviewing and collaborating. The Town could benefit from using Crime Prevention Through Community Design (CPTCD) programs.



## **Attachment A: Stakeholder Interviews Participants**

Don Albini: Planning Commissioner, Town of Windsor

Ross Albertson: Planning Commissioner, Town of Windsor

Steve Allen: Vice Mayor, Town of Windsor

Karen Alves: Real Estate Broker and Downtown Windsor Property Owner

Bob Bisno: Attorney

William Botieff: General Contractor

Oscar Chavez: Windsor Unified School District Board Member

Amy Crabb: Development Manager, Council on Aging

Richard Coombs: Local Developer, Airport Business Center General Partner

Lois Fisher: Planning Commissioner, Town of Windsor

Dominic Foppoli: Planning Commissioner, Town of Windsor

Billy Forrest: Windsor Unified School District Board Member & Town Hall liaison

Debora Fudge: Town Council Member, Town of Windsor

Rue Furch: Developer

Robin Goble: Town Council Member, Town of Windsor

Martin Goldsbrough: President, FIRMA Design Group

Matt Gustafson: Battalion Chief & Fire Marshal, Windsor Fire Protection District

Debby Hendershot: Realtor, Wine Country Group

Heather Ippoliti: Town Administrative Services Director

Steve Jorgensen: Superintendent, Windsor Unified School District

Tom Lawrence: Broker, Wine Country Group and Windsor Economic Development Task Force Member

Tom Michelletti: CEO, The CREDO Group

Mark Millan: Planning Commissioner, Town of Windsor

Curt Nichols: Principal, Carlile Macy

Bruce Okrepkie: Mayor, Town of Windsor

Steve Pantazes: Town of Windsor Building Official

Sam Salmon: Council Member, Town of Windsor

Scott Schellinger, CSW Land Solutions

Chris Spallino: Chief, Windsor Police Department

Peter Stanley: Principal, ArchiLogix

Christine Tevini: Executive Director, Windsor Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center

Ben vanZutphen: Developer and Property Owner

Lessa Vivian: Windsor Downtown Merchants Association Board Member



## **Attachment B: Stakeholder Interview Questions**

The following questions were posed to stakeholders during the interviews in order to prompt interviewees to identify key concerns and expectations for the General Plan Update process.

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What are the greatest challenges facing the town today? What trends concern you when thinking about Windsor's future? What are the three top issues that should be addressed during the General Plan Update? Why?
2. What aspects of the town do you like most? What do you like about living or doing business in Windsor? What are the town's greatest assets and how should the General Plan build on them?
3. What do you think are the major strengths or weaknesses of the existing Windsor General Plan or of Town policies for land use and development?
4. Quality of life and community health are growing concerns for communities. What are ways the Town can enhance residents' quality of life and/or improve residents' health?
5. As the Town's Urban Growth Ordinance is revisited in 2017 and the community looks ahead to potential growth areas (both within and outside the Urban Growth Boundary), what are the ideas or topics you would like to see discussed?
6. Economic development is a major focus of the General Plan Update. What specific industries or types of businesses have growth potential in Windsor and where are the most appropriate locations for these types of uses?
7. What other communities or places are good examples or have features that would be good models for Windsor?
8. If we were to interview just three people in the town about future growth, who should be on that interview list?
9. What other advice or comments do you have?