



# Economic Development

Developing a healthy and diverse base of businesses is critical to the success of Windsor. At its heart, economic development is about building a healthy economy in order to have a healthy community. The Town has many opportunities to fulfill its untapped economic potential.

Windsor's agricultural heritage is a mainstay of the local economy. The Town is located in the heart of a highly unique agricultural crossroads of wine, organic agriculture, and the artisan food movement. The Economic Development Element seeks to preserve and enhance this heritage by supporting and expanding the wine/craft beverage industry, agricultural industry, and related tourism.

At the same time, the Town of Windsor prides itself on being welcome to new ideas and innovation. High tech and green industries are up-and-coming in Sonoma County, and Windsor is well positioned to become a leader in these fields. Windsor's commitment to sustainability can pave the way for attracting green industry and create a unique identifier for the community. The Town can work to attract high tech and innovation industries that appeal to younger generations of workers that can bring new energy and diversity to the community.

A wide variety of retail thrives in Windsor – from Downtown tenants that benefit from the walkable Town Green neighborhood to shopping centers anchored by national retail outlets. Bell Village shopping center, anchored by a flagship Oliver's Market, is the newest addition. This Element seeks to capture a greater share of local spending by encouraging new retail establishments that provide needed goods and services to local residents and businesses.

While the majority of Windsor residents commute elsewhere for employment, the Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport and adjacent Airport area businesses provide high-paying jobs for local residents. The policies in this element seek to grow the local base of high-paying jobs to provide opportunities for residents to both live and work in Windsor. This has the added benefit of reducing commute times, which will help to meet the Town's greenhouse gas reduction goals.

This element provides guidance on how Windsor can build upon its successes by fostering a business-friendly environment, encouraging additional local employment opportunities, cultivating economic diversification, and expanding the tourism industry. The Town also has an opportunity to seek partnerships through collaboration, which are key to a successful economic development strategy.

## Business Attraction, Retention, Expansion

Local employment opportunities are limited in Windsor, and most residents commute to surrounding areas for work. Windsor has the ability to address this jobs/housing imbalance by proactively working to increase high-paying local employment opportunities through business attraction, retention, and expansion. There are opportunities to further streamline the development process, create incentives for new and existing businesses, and focus on community assets to expand local industries. Such local assets include the wine and craft beer industry, Downtown and the Town Green, the SMART station, the proximity to Sonoma County Airport and a large base of employees.

### Goal ED-1: Business Attraction, Retention, Expansion

*Increase the tax base and create more local job opportunities through business attraction, retention, and expansion. (Source: New Goal, Town Staff and Consultants)*

#### Policies

- ED-1.1 Designate Sufficient Industrial and Commercial Land.** The Town shall designate sufficient areas of land allowing for appropriate parcel sizes and with adequate infrastructure capacity to accommodate light industrial and commercial development. (Source: Policy C.4.2, Existing General Plan)
- ED-1.2 Support Diversity and Innovation.** The Town shall promote an economic environment that supports diverse and innovative industries and businesses within Windsor, in part by facilitating rather than regulating business development. (Policy C.1.2, Source: Existing General Plan)
- ED-1.3 Diversified Employment.** The Town shall strive to develop a diversified economy to provide living-wage jobs for Windsor residents of all ages and skill levels and to cushion the Town's economy against a downturn in any one sector and against seasonal fluctuations, to and encourage Windsor residents to work in town. (Source: Policy C.3.1, Existing General Plan)
- ED-1.4 Promote Job Awareness.** To foster Windsor residents' awareness of job opportunities and to improve the skills of local residents, the Town shall support private and volunteer efforts to announce employment openings and to educate/train residents in new job skills. (Source: Policy C.2.1, Existing General Plan)
- ED-1.5 Protect Strategic Business Sites.** The Town shall protect its strategic business sites from encroachment by other land uses that may preclude future economic development. (Source: Action 5.3.1 Modified, Economic Development Strategic Plan)



- ED-1.6 Target industries.** The Town shall proactively work to expand the following target industries in Windsor: innovative technology; high-end product development and manufacturing; green services and construction; agriculture, including food, wine, and craft beer/spirits; retail/commercial; and tourism. (Source: New Policy based on Windsor Economic Strategic Plan)
- ED-1.7 Airport Area Businesses.** The Town shall continue to encourage business attraction and expansion in the Airport business area to expand the number of high-paying jobs available to Windsor residents. (Source: New Policy based on Windsor Economic Strategic Plan)
- ED-1.8 Business Attraction Incentives.** The Town shall provide incentives, as feasible, to businesses that provide significant private capital investment; create a large amount of jobs and public revenues; or that develop catalyst projects that could result in further investment. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-1.9 Enhancing Infrastructure to Support Development.** The Town shall promote, support, or undertake as financially feasible, upgrades to public infrastructure including but not limited to sidewalks, trees, and sewer in Town, specifically in boulevard areas, to lower the costs of and attract new development. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-1.10 Permit Streamlining.** The Town shall attract new and support existing businesses by streamlining the permitting process to expedite economic development opportunities and expansion of existing businesses. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants).
- ED-1.11 Increase Local Spending.** The Town shall encourage the development and expansion of retail establishments that increase local spending within Windsor and provide needed goods and services to local residents and businesses. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-1.12 Small Business Retail.** The Town shall encourage the development and expansion of local retail start-ups to enhance Windsor's unique small-business shopping experience. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-1.13 Latino Business Outreach.** The Town shall continue to reach out, visit and support Latino-owned and Latino community serving businesses to promote economic sustainability, local ownership and job opportunities. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-1.14 Business Retention.** The Town shall assist in the retention and expansion of existing businesses by providing and coordinating available financial and non-financial resources. (Source: Policy C.1.1, Existing General Plan)




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*Economic Development Strategic Plan  
(EDSP)*

*The Town's last plan was completed in 2008, highlighting goals and actions to enhance the business environment, further local collaboration and partnerships in the business community, encourage downtown development, expand the tourism industry, and provide opportunities to attain sustainable leadership.*

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**ED-1.15 Green Industries.** The Town shall strive to attract sustainable businesses focusing on renewable resources, alternative energy, green construction, and green manufacturing. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)

**ED-1.16 Business Expansion.** The Town shall encourage industrial and point-of-sales businesses to expand in Windsor. (Source: Policy C.1.5, Existing General Plan)

## Downtown Windsor

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Windsor is home to an award-winning Downtown, which is focused on capturing the vibrancy and uniqueness that Windsor offers through local boutique shops, restaurants, cafes, and expansive open space. The success of the Downtown is anchored by the Town Green, which hosts a number of family friendly concerts, cultural events, and festivals year-round. The design and development of Downtown is guided by the Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan, creating this one-of-a-kind cultural and entertainment attraction. The policies in this section build upon the success of Downtown and the Town Green by encouraging the implementation of the policies outlined in the Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan.

### Goal ED-2: Downtown Windsor

*Reinforce the Downtown as the civic and cultural heart of Windsor*

*(Source: New Goal based on the Economic Development Strategic Plan)*

#### Policies

**ED-2.1 Continue Downtown Enhancements.** The Town shall encourage retail diversity in the Downtown, including the establishment of anchor specialty retail shops, boutiques, art spaces, wineries/tasting rooms, restaurants, and entertainment uses, as well as, residential, office, and convenience shopping. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)

**ED-2.2 Public Realm.** The Town shall continue to invest in the public realm and emphasize civic and community uses in the Downtown area. (Source: Policy C.5.2 modified, Existing General Plan)

**ED-2.3 Boutique Hotel.** The Town shall encourage the development of a boutique hotel in Downtown to provide an opportunity for overnight stays in the heart of Downtown, for visitors to enjoy and explore Windsor's local business, restaurants, and nightlife. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)

**ED-2.4 Office Space Opportunities.** The Town shall strive to expand the Downtown employment base through increased opportunities for office development in appropriate locations within the Downtown, except where active uses are required by the Downtown/Station Area Specific Plan. (Source: Goal 6.5, Economic Development Strategic Plan)

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#### Downtown Parking Strategy

*Parking is one of the biggest issues in Downtown Windsor. The Transportation and Mobility Element contains policies to address Downtown parking issues as well as an implementation program to prepare and implement a Downtown parking strategy.*



- ED-2.5 Capitalize on SMART Station.** The Town shall capitalize on the SMART commuter rail station in Downtown by [actively pursuing the extension of SMART commuter rail service by 2018 and](#) encouraging businesses and tourist serving uses that generate ridership to locate near to the SMART station. (Source: New Policy based on Economic Development Strategic Plan, Strategic Initiative 6)
- ED-2.7 Expand Downtown Attractions.** The Town shall continue to promote expanded amenities and attractions in Downtown and the Town Green, including restaurants, entertainment venues, and festivals/events. (Source: Guiding Principle 10, Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan)
- ED-2.8 Downtown Parking Strategies.** To ensure the continued economic success of Downtown, the Town shall [develop and](#) implement multiple parking strategies to increase the parking supply and manage parking demand. (Source: Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan)

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*Parking management is addressed more comprehensively in the Transportation and Mobility Element.*

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## Tourism

Windsor is surrounded by world class wineries [in the Russian River Valley appellation](#) and an abundance of outdoor recreational areas, including the Russian River, providing numerous activities for visitors and residents alike. Windsor's popular Downtown and Town Green, include boutique shops, restaurants, and year-around festivals geared towards families, highlighting Windsor's commitment to creating an inclusive environment for people of all ages, cultures, and socio-economic status. The policies in this section seek to continue to enhance and expand attractions in Windsor that serve visitors, making Windsor a premier family-oriented destination.

### Goal ED-3: Tourism

*Ensure Windsor's long-term success and economic sustainability by diversifying and expanding tourism attractions, highlighting the unique history and character of the Town (Source: New Goal, Town Staff and Consultants).*

#### Policies

- ED-3.1 Family-Friendly Destination.** The Town shall continue to market Windsor as Sonoma County's premier family-friendly destination. (Source: Policy, 3.1.1, Economic Development Strategic Plan)
- ED-3.2 Destination Playground.** The Town shall develop a destination playground that would attract families from Windsor and beyond (Source: Economic Development Strategic Plan, Policy 3.3.2, Parks and Recreation Master Plan P5.4)
- ED 3.3 Increase Tourism Establishments.** The Town shall strive to attract more tourism-related establishments to Windsor. (Source: Guiding Principle 7 modified, Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan)

- ED-3.4 Expanded Meeting Venues.** The Town shall encourage the development of additional meeting venues to support conferences or large community events. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-3.5 Lodging Establishment Partnership.** The Town shall encourage outreach and collaboration with local lodging establishments to promote overnight stays for visitors and increase transient occupancy tax revenues. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-3.6 Outdoor Recreation.** The Town shall strive to attract events that capitalize on the Town's parks and recreational facilities, affirming Windsor as a destination for recreation and healthy lifestyles. The Town shall seek events that have limited impacts and which complement the Town's goals and desired image. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-3.7 Special Events.** The Town shall encourage special events that benefit local businesses and contribute to the Town's overall economic success. (Source: New Policy, based on Parks and Recreation Master Plan Goal 8)
- ED-3.7 Wayfinding.** The Town shall continue to enhance its wayfinding program to make navigating easy for visitors. (Source: Policy 3.2.2, Economic Development Strategic Plan)
- ED-3.8 Wine and Craft Beverage Tourism.** The Town strive to attract tourism centered on the wine industry, [area wineries and wineries within the Russian River Valley appellation](#), craft beer and distilleries, such as urban wineries, tasting rooms, and beverage production tours. (Source: New Policy, based on Issues and Opportunities Report)
- ED-3.9 Agritourism.** The Town shall promote local agriculture and farms, their methods, and the agricultural heritage that exists in Windsor. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-3.10 Commitment to Agriculture.** The Town shall encourage tourism attractions that highlight the agricultural heritage of Windsor and the community's commitment to sustainable agriculture. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-3.11 Green Tourism.** The Town shall promote green tourism opportunities such as bicycling tours, energy efficient bus tours, and electric vehicle rentals. (Source: New Policy based on Economic Development Strategic Plan)



## Partnerships and Collaboration

Partnerships and collaboration amongst the Town, business community, and local and regional organizations is key to economic success. Successful partnerships can lead to a unified community that focuses on fostering a business friendly environment collectively advancing the Town. The Town enjoys beneficial and mutually-supportive partnerships with the Windsor Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center, the Old Downtown Windsor Merchants' Association, Sonoma County Tourism, and Sonoma County Building Economic Success Together (BEST). Sonoma County also has a robust economic development and visitor attraction program that the Town can continue to coordinate with to support local growth and programs. These partnerships maximize the Town's regional economic influence, leverage the power of collaborative efforts, and support the Town's ability to both assist businesses as well as attract tourists.

### Goal ED-4: Partnerships and Collaboration

*Encourage partnerships and collaboration amongst the Town and business community, to highlight Windsor as the model for community leadership and innovation. (Source: New Goal, Town Staff and Consultants).*

- ED-4.1 Building Local Business Leadership Capacity.** The Town shall continue to collaborate with local and regional business groups and associations to build alliances and develop strategies to enhance the presence, engagement, and involvement of local business leaders in local decision making and ownership of the business community's future. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-4.2 Partnering with the County.** The Town shall continue to partner with Sonoma County on economic development proposals and initiatives that directly affect the Town. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-4.3 Regional Collaboration.** The Town shall collaborate with local and regional economic development organizations to support the economy in Windsor and Sonoma County. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)
- ED-4.4 Public/Private Partnerships.** The Town shall encourage private sector-investment and reinvestment that creates the types of jobs for which residents are trained and qualified. (Source: New Policy based on Issues and Opportunity Report)
- ED-4.5 Partnering with the Latino Business Community.** The Town shall continue to support and partner with the Latino business community to foster its success and growth. (Source: New Policy, Town Staff and Consultants)

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