



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

DRAFT

Summary of Community Workshop and Survey
July 2009

Town of Colma
Planning Department
1190 El Camino Real
Colma, CA 94014

Draft Community Workshop and Survey Summary

TOWN OF COLMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

In 2008, the Town of Colma developed a business and public outreach plan to engage business owners and residents affected by the Town's economic development efforts.

In spring 2009, the Town held a Community Workshop and also asked local business owners, residents and Colma shoppers to participate in a survey to identify their economic needs and concerns. Staff from the Colma Planning Department and the Colma-Daly City Chamber of Commerce will interview local businesses for additional, more in-depth input, and will include a summary of the interview information in a subsequent version of this document. This draft summary describes the results of the community outreach efforts to date.

I. KEY FINDINGS

In summary, the findings of both the workshop and the surveys implied the following:

- Colma has significant community assets key to economic development, including its accessibility, its pro-business Town government, and the Town's sense of pride and community.
- There are several advantages to having a business in Colma, including ample parking infrastructure, proximity to regional freeways, and a mix of both national chains and smaller local businesses
- Local businesses in Colma are currently concerned with both local and national economic issues, ranging from the vacant parcels and businesses in Colma, to Colma's mix of old and new businesses and development, to unemployment and the national credit crunch.
- Local businesses may be interested in programs that improve transportation access and infrastructure, marketing and branding campaigns, and streamlined business and development permitting.
- Colma residents and shoppers are interested in attracting new businesses to Colma; specifically neighborhood-serving uses such as a grocery store and post-office, to national discount retail chains that can generate significant sales tax revenue.

II. WORKSHOP

On May 4, 2009, a Community Workshop was conducted for both residents and representatives of the local business community. The workshop was held at the Colma Community Center and approximately 25 participants attended. Approximately one third of attendees identified themselves as residents or shoppers, one third identified themselves as local business owners, and the remaining third identified themselves as



City Planner Andrea Ouse welcomes workshop participants, discusses the need for economic development, and describes the workshop.

belonging to both categories. Several Council Members were also present to observe but not participate in the workshop activities.

The Workshop encouraged participants to brainstorm solutions to common economic issues and describe the needs of local businesses, Colma residents and shoppers. Attendees participated in activities, led by Colma staff members, designed to generate information and ideas. Each workshop activity is described in detail below, along with each activity's key findings.

Activity 1: Colma's Economic Future

In this activity, participants used a combination of post-it note brainstorming and discussion to answer the following questions posed by the facilitator, the answers to which are summarized below.

What are Colma's primary assets?

1. Accessible and safe parking.
2. Good business climate, with friendly businesses, good discount stores and lots of visitors.
3. Ease of transportation and access; Colma is located within minutes of San Francisco, BART stations and is easy to get to by freeway or by the street network.
4. Small town atmosphere with a strong sense of community.
5. Town government that is pro-business, supportive and provides for the safety of its residents through good police and fire service.
6. High levels of maintenance and good aesthetic environment; the Town is well kept, quiet and clean.
7. Benefits for residents.



In Activity 1, participants brainstormed Colma's assets and economic priorities.

8. Existing local businesses include a variety of shops, Target, small community stores, and good merchants.

What should Colma's economic priorities be?

1. Improving transportation and transportation infrastructure, such as a shuttle or plans for anticipating future traffic flow increases.
2. Supporting existing businesses to provide continuity of our existing commercial core, including auto row.
3. Streamlining the permit and approval process for new businesses and new development.
4. Identifying and courting new businesses, especially those businesses and services that Colma currently does not have (restaurants, grocery stores, etc.), businesses that would generate sales tax, and businesses that add to a vibrant mix of retail and service opportunities.

Other suggestions included developing a permanent home for the Chamber of Commerce within Colma, developing Colma into a 'Green Hub' for sustainable businesses, providing more recreational opportunities and amenities and increasing the size of Colma by annexing adjacent land.

Activity 2: Colma's Local Business Climate

In this activity, participants were asked to discuss and identify concerns facing local businesses as well as to define solutions to these concerns. Participants engaged in group discussions to answer the following questions. Their responses are summarized below.

What are the primary advantages and disadvantages of locating a business in Colma?

1. Advantages to locating a business in Colma include:
 - a. We have good 'business climate components', such as a nice retail facilities, a supportive Town government, and a family atmosphere.
 - b. Excellent freeway access to businesses.
 - c. Traffic to our national chains helps our small businesses; and our national chains have good name recognition.
 - d. Close proximity to BART.
 - e. Fairly smooth permitting processes.

- f. Parking availability.
 - g. Convenient location for businesses.
 - h. El Camino Real has name recognition.
2. Disadvantages to locating a business in Colma include:

- a. Lack of name recognition or strong and positive name recognition; Colma is only associated with cemeteries.
- b. Cemetery land use does not provide tax revenue to the Town.
- c. Cemetery traffic is not being captured by other businesses.
- d. Town provides residents with lots of benefits, but not many benefits for businesses.
- e. While the permitting process is good, it could be better.
- f. No major draw.
- g. No good pedestrian connection between Colma residences and Colma businesses.
- h. Poor signage.
- i. Poor public transportation in commercial areas.



*Notes from Activity 2
identifying advantages and
disadvantages.*

What are the most pressing concerns facing local businesses today?

- 1. Current vacancies (especially along Auto Row) and abandoned properties.
- 2. Defining the appropriate balance between old and new businesses and development.
- 3. High levels of unemployment
- 4. The current credit crunch; inability to secure loans and money.
- 5. Heavy traffic along El Camino Real; El Camino Real not being a safe and inviting place for pedestrians.
- 6. Uncontrolled lease rates.

7. Need better signage and advertising.
8. Town is too skewed towards auto uses.
9. Need more diversity in our business mix (and our retail mix specifically).

Activity 3: Colma's Consumer Climate

In the third activity, participants were asked to discuss and identify the needs of shoppers as well as evaluate the Colma shopping experience. Participants used post-it note brainstorming and facilitated discussion to answer the following questions. Responses are summarized, in order of importance, below.

Why do you shop where you do?

1. Location factors that impact where we shop include:
 - a. Whether the business is closer to my home or work.
 - b. Whether or not the business is easily accessible by car and the freeway.
 - c. Whether or not the business is close to others that I want to visit.
2. Design factors that impact where we shop include:
 - a. Whether the stores are easily accessible.
 - b. Whether there is ample and safe parking.
3. Specific shops and services that impact where we shop include:
 - a. The overall store selection.
 - b. Target and Kohl's - stores with a variety of goods.
 - c. Stores that are smaller and friendlier than others.
 - d. Operating hours of specific stores.
 - e. The diversity of the stores.
4. Other factors that impact where we shop include:
 - a. Whether my patronage benefits the Town (e.g., whether my purchase will generate sales tax for Colma).

What are the advantages and disadvantages of shopping in Colma?

1. Advantages to shopping in Colma include:
 - a. It's easy to park.
 - b. The stores are less crowded than in other areas.
 - c. There is good BART/transit access.
 - d. I know the stores here.
 - e. I like the small town feel of Colma.
 - f. Colma feels safe; good police force.
 - g. Colma looks good.
 - h. The stores have good lighting and good hours.
2. Disadvantages to shopping in Colma include:
 - a. Design of shopping facilities isn't modern.
 - b. Traffic congestion.
 - c. There's no shuttle to take you between stores, and some stores are not near one another.
 - d. Colma lacks basic neighborhood services, including restaurants, grocery/produce market, pharmacy or post office.



Far left: a staff facilitator leads participants in a discussion on consumer needs. Left: notes generating on the Colma shopping experience.

What actions, businesses or services would encourage you to shop in Colma more often?

1. Farmer's market-inspired community events or festivals.
2. Grocery store, especially a health food store or "Whole Foods" type of store.
3. Kids play places - place to host parties.
4. Education or vocational services.
5. Provision of family discounts.
6. Shuttles or public transit.
7. A "Shop Colma" type marketing campaign.
8. Coffee shops.
9. Big name stores.
10. Theater.
11. A Goodwill or St. Vincent de Paul thrift store.
12. Family restaurants or fine dining establishments.

III. SURVEY

Between March and June, Colma distributed surveys to Colma businesses and residents, and also administered surveys to non-residents shopping in Colma. The surveys were designed to solicit specific and somewhat detailed feedback on preferences, advantages/disadvantages of Colma, as well as precise information regarding issues facing businesses and consumers. The survey included multiple choice, "yes/no", and short answer type questions.

In total, 140 surveys were received, including 103 surveys from residents, 19 from Colma businesses, and 18 from non-resident shoppers. Follow-up in-person interviews with businesses are planned for late July 2009, which will provide more in-depth information gathering from the local business perspective. Once the information from the business interviews are included summarized in this document, the document will be finalized. The findings from each of the responding groups are summarized below.

Business Owner Survey Findings

The Town received a total of 19 surveys from businesses located along Mission Road, Serramonte Boulevard, Serra Center or 280 Metro Center, El Camino Real, Collins Avenue, Colma Boulevard, Hillside Boulevard and within a residential neighborhood.

Six surveys were received from cemetery or cemetery-related businesses, 5 from auto dealerships or related businesses, 2 from personal service businesses, 4 from general retail businesses and 2 from construction related businesses.

Findings from the Business Owner Survey include:

1. When asked to identify up to 3 issues or concerns facing Colma businesses, the most common answers were **competition from other cities, businesses and industries, business attraction and recruitment, and business retention.**
2. When asked to identify up to 3 specific projects or actions that businesses would like to see in Colma, the most common answers were **fill existing vacancies, brand Colma with a specific identity or sense of place, and create a Town-wide marketing campaign.**
3. When asked to identify Colma attributes that provided advantages to Colma businesses, the most common answers were **freeway access, location and proximity to BART and SamTrans bus routes.**
4. When asked which kinds of development or uses Colma businesses would like to see in the Town, the most common answers were **restaurants, value-based or off-price retailers, and grocery stores.**
5. When asked which kinds of development or uses Colma businesses would NOT like to see in the Town, the most common answers were **value-based or off-price retailers, convenience stores, and open space.**
6. When asked 'what is the single most important thing Colma could do right now for Colma businesses', answers included:
 - a. Lower rents.
 - b. Town government could be more business friendly.
 - c. Help bring customers to Colma.
 - d. Market Colma as a necropolis - there is no other city in the US like it.
 - e. Lower taxes.
 - f. Less city government.

- g. Create a business directory on the City website.
- h. Pressure landlords to fill vacancies.
- i. City should pay for an electronic sign by the freeway to advertise businesses.
- j. Invite businesses to community events.
- k. Lower property taxes and lower lease rates.

Resident and Shopper Survey Findings

In total, the Town received or administered 121 surveys, including 103 from Colma residents and an additional 18 from non-residents shopping in Colma. Of the non-resident shoppers, 1 is a resident of San Bruno, 3 are residents of Pacifica, 4 are residents of Daly City, 1 is a resident of South San Francisco and 9 are residents of San Francisco.

Findings from the Resident and Shopper Surveys include:

1. **Most Colma residents shop in Colma at least once each week, or several times each week, while most non-residents shop in Colma approximately once each month.**
2. Most Colma residents shop in Colma because stores are close to their home and the businesses where they want to shop are located in Colma. Most non-residents shop in Colma because the businesses they want are located in Colma.
3. The stores both residents and non-residents list as visiting most frequently are **Target, Home Depot, Kohl's, Bed Bath & Beyond, Best Buy and Marshalls, in that order.**

4. When asked which stores they wish were available in Colma, responses include the following specific chains, stores or services:

99 Cent Store	Home Goods	Nugget Market
Andersen's Bakery	IKEA	Pak N Save
American Apparel	In N Out Burger	Peet's
Banana Republic	JC Penney	Pet Club
Big Lots	K-Mart	Safeway
Borders	Little Caesar's	Sanraku (sushi restaurant)
Cheeseburger Cheeseburger	Loehmann's	Sears
Chuck E Cheese	Long's	Staples
Costco	Lowes	Starbucks
Dave and Buster's	Lunardi's	Taco Bell
Draeger's or Ralph's Supermarkets	McDonald's	Toys R Us
DSW	Mi Pueblo	Walgreen's
Food Maxx	Molly Stone's	Walmart
Fry's	Olive Garden	Whole Foods
Gap		

5. The **majority** of respondents agreed with the following statements:
- If more restaurants were in Colma, I would probably patronize them.
 - I feel like Colma has a strong Town identity.
 - When I shop at Colma businesses, parking is easy.
 - When I shop in Colma, I usually visit more than one store or business in a single trip.
 - I recommend Colma businesses to my friends, neighbors and coworkers.
 - I like the look and feel of Colma.
 - I shop in Colma because the stores and businesses here are affordable.

6. The **majority** or close to the majority of respondents make most of their purchases in the following categories at Colma businesses:
 - a. Clothing
 - b. Household items
 - c. Books, CDs or DVDs
 - d. Gifts
 - e. Electronics
 - f. Items related to a specific hobby (i.e. video games, crafts, cooking, etc.)
7. In addition to answering the multiple choice survey questions, many respondents also left additional comments. These comments included several requesting a grocery store, and requests to fill existing vacant parcels and buildings.