

## **MEMORANDUM**

FROM: Kerri Dorman  
TO: Town Council  
DATE: 7 December, 2021  
RE: **Request to Consider Community Economic Development Committee**

### **BACKGROUND**

At our Council retreat in June, one of our exercises was to brainstorm about new goals for the upcoming year, and then Council and Staff voted on the goals to prioritize them. Based on previous conversations with our residents and businesses, I put forth the suggestion that we proceed with a **Community Economic Development Committee to work on our “go forward” of the best ways to combine and synergize the smarts, talents and resources of our residents and our businesses to sustain and develop the economics of our Town, while keeping our community livable as our hometown.** Council Member Knight supported the idea, and although there were some head nods when I presented the idea, when it came time to prioritize the goals we should proceed with, I was the only one to see it in as one of our top three goals.

As a Council, we committed at our retreat that ideas not prioritized that day could be revisited if brought forward by a Council Member in the future.

### **REQUEST PRESENTED**

Continuing to believe that this Committee is critical to our sustained viability as a community, at our September meeting, I asked for Council support to explore this program, and was tasked to research and present this Memorandum.

**Today, I am formalizing my request that the Council convene and support a Community Economic Development Committee.**

### **SUMMARY OF THE NEED: “RISING TIDE”**

*It’s especially true in Yountville... a rising tide floats all boats.*

*--- Chef Bob Hurley*

*(discussing Yountville’s unique network of businesses, residents and local government)*

In researching this Memorandum, I’ve spoken with over 20 residents and businesses, with our Chamber of Commerce and with our Veterans Home administration.

The discussions were wide-ranging:

- the strong development and diversity – that is, competition -- of the City of Napa and Calistoga
- the need for workforce training
- the need for workforce housing
- the need for our residents and businesses to have an opportunity to sit down together and to join forces for the sustained future of our Town
- the recognition that we are a “maturing market” and the need to be ahead of change
- the usefulness of a venue for collaboration because we tend to be “in silos”
- the high importance of long-range planning

Most importantly, even these brief discussions generated excitement among participants about the possibilities for our Town, and sparked numerous new ideas about what might help Yountville make the most of its future.

All participants agreed that a rising tide does, indeed, float all boats in Yountville – for residents and businesses alike. And, the considerable majority of participants agreed that a **Community Economic Development Committee is “a good idea” that has a place in Yountville.**

#### REASON #1: WE NEED COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NOT JUST ECONOMIC GROWTH

*“What’s good for Yountville, is good for the Bardessonos.”*

*--Pat Bardessono, quoting her late husband Steve*

*“[A] typical definition of economic development tends to narrow the scope of acceptable activities to those with direct (and measurable) economic outcomes....”  
(UN Habitat website)*

*“Economic growth is basically an accounting measure. It measures how much money is changing hands in the economy.... it's only an account of the growth in the number of commercial transactions in the economy.” (S. Sridhar article)*

***In contrast, “economic development is central to supporting our businesses, spurring development, and improving the quality of life for our residents.”*** (City of Napa website)

*“In small towns, community development is economic development. ... [C]ase studies demonstrate that capacity-building and other strategies typically associated with community development are analogous with actions designed to produce economic outcomes.” (UNC School of Government, “Small Towns, Big Ideas” (UNC))*

*“Viable community economic development involves the use of a comprehensive package of strategies and tools rather than a piecemeal approach -- there is no silver bullet, no single strategy, no ‘one thing’ that a community can do to achieve success -- it takes multiple strategies applied over a period of time to be successful. (Local Govt Institute of Wisconsin article)*

**REASON #2: THE TOWN IS BEST SUITED – AND RESPONSIBLE -- TO ASSURE AND PROMOTE  
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

*Being proactive (as opposed to reactive) can be measured by a small town's willingness and ability to act on a particular challenge before it becomes a problem." (UNC)*

*"Innovative local governance, partnerships and organizations significantly enhance the capacity for community economic development. ... It is clear that innovative local governance, in a variety of forms, can strengthen a community's CED strategy. (UNC)*

*"Creating a robust economic development strategy often takes a concerted effort of multiple partners coming together around a common goal. ... It presents a framework for information to gather, issues to consider, and potential approaches to explore. (EPA website)*

***"[P]ublic-private (including not-for-profit) partnerships are emerging as the prominent organizational model for small town CED.*** Given the wide range of concerns that cut across CED, small towns are taking creative approaches to public-private partnerships.... *[T]here is no silver bullet.... No single strategy.... Successful CED in small towns is always multi-faceted. Small towns that are working to develop CED strategies should take nothing off the table in selecting strategies to pursue. (UNC)*

*"[L]ocal leaders are urged to challenge the status quo...." (National League of Cities publication)*

**REASON #3: OUR RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES  
RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR THE COMMITTEE AND SUPPORT ITS FORMATION**

***"Our community must step up to this.... We have to do this" – "The idea of it is terrific" – "Love the concept of it"***

*We don't want to be "behind the wave."*

*We want to be "a cool town for young and old" – we don't want to just be "a stop for parents and grandparents."*

*We need to find new and better ways to hire, train and retain employees*

*Retail and shopping are critical, and we need to bring in those sectors*

*We need to find a way to bring employee and affordable housing to Town or nearby*

*We need to keep up the "evolution of Yountville" – we need new ways to "sell the Yountville experience"*

*We need to "encourage entrepreneurs and creatives"*

***We cannot afford "the petrification of vibrancy"***

*--Takeaways and quotes from various interviews*

#### REASON #4: WE HAVE NO COMPARABLE STRUCTURE – AND WE NEED ONE

What the Committee is not:

- Envision Yountville 2.0
- A mirror or extension of existing ad hoc committees (for example, parking, housing or small projects)
- An extension of or replacement for the Chamber of Commerce or its own committees
- An extension of or replacement for the various “working groups” that arose during the pandemic but (1) are not public; (2) are not Yountville specific; (3) are event-driven and responsive rather than being future oriented and long-term proactive

**What the Committee is and why it fills a unique role:**

- An active forum for research and dialogue to develop and make recommendations, and take actions on, community/economic development issues

*“[C]ommunities that take a comprehensive approach to CED – one that includes economic and broader, longer-term, community development goals -- stand to gain more than small towns that take a piecemeal approach.” (UNC)*

- Ongoing – empowered to take on near term and long term issues

*“[B]ecause CED includes short-range and long-range strategies, it is by definition a long-term and transformative process.... (UNC)*

- Convened by the Town, but giving a meaningful voice to businesses, residents, the Chamber of Commerce and Town Council (assisted by Town Staff)

*“[I]n small towns, people are always the most important resource.... Case after case has demonstrated that people (as opposed to money or other resources) are the one absolutely necessary ingredient to successful CED.” (UNC)*

#### WHAT YOUNTVILLE’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MIGHT LOOK LIKE

*“[T]here is no universally applicable formula for determining the right way to do [Community Economic Development]. Decisions about what to do and why to do it have to be based on local conditions, context and capacity.” (UNC)*

It is up to Council to determine the details of the composition, scope and tasks of the Committee, but here are **some of the main points I’d like to see open for community and Council discussion when we see a substantive agenda item:**

- *Composition of Committee* – I’m hoping for a committee comprised of multiple types of stakeholders – government, residents, businesses, housing specialists, etc.

- *Committee voting* – I believe that Council Members who are Committee members should not have votes on the Committee’s issues – rather, the Council Members should be there for discussion and to hear firsthand the concerns, voices and creative solutions of our community, reserving votes for the Council level
- *Committee charge* – Council should be very broad in setting the Committee’s “mission statement” -- the Committee should have the latitude to investigate and educate themselves, to be creative in getting community input, and must be supported in the foundation and tools they need to identify and harmonize the development necessary to support and complement our overarching community goals. The Committee’s work plan should include both short- and long-range thinking and planning. For example, a first order of business would be to collect data on the current Economic Recovery Program and make recommendations about whether, and if so, how, to make it permanent. On a long-term basis, a two, five and ten year CED plan would seem to be in order.

*“Repeatedly, the researchers found that successful, thriving and ‘cool’ cities were proactive and determined to push their community forward, no matter how small the steps. (ICIC blog)*

- *Committee independence* – I see the Committee as self- and consultant-directed, as opposed to directed by Town Staff. Certainly, Staff will be involved, but the Committee should be an independent body, with a budget perhaps funded by the Town and the Chamber of Commerce – and, of course, grant money should be pursued. The Committee should elect its officers, hire its consultants and chart its own course, subject only to a broad mandate from the Council.

*“[Identified] improvements, potential new programs, and/or suggestions for revisions of policies and procedures that would enhance the City’s economic development efforts may then be recommended by the Committee to the City Council and staff...”*

*--City of Lompoc*

- *Timing* – I’m very aware of our Staff challenges and that COVID still overlays so much of our ability to get things done in certain time frames – but, as an early task, I would like to have the Committee really zero in on the current recovery program -- what’s working, what’s not – not as an end in itself, but rather a first step in a larger, mid- and long-term incremental plan.

## CONCLUSION

*Successful small towns tend to balance short-term economic gains with longer-term community development goals. Small towns with the most dramatic outcomes tend to be proactive and future-oriented; they embrace change and assume risk.” (UNC)*

*“CED is a process through which communities initiate their own solutions to local problems. CED strategies create economic opportunities, but in a way that improves social, civic and environmental conditions.” (UN Habitat)*