

Greenbelt Competitive & Collaborative Analysis

DRAFT

Hyattsville Community Development Corporation

6/16/2016

TABLE of CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. Competitive Assessment of the Greenbelt Community as an Economic Development Entity

- A. Evaluation Methodology
- B. Economic Identity Summary
- C. The Greenbelt Value Proposition
 - i. Residential
 - ii. Commercial
 - iii. Additional Considerations

2. Inventory of Municipal & County Economic Development Tools

- A. Website Review
- B. Program Snapshots
 - i. College Park
 - ii. Hyattsville
 - iii. Bowie
 - iv. Laurel
 - v. Mount Rainier
 - vi. New Carrollton
 - vii. Greenbelt
- C. Economic Development Survey
- D. County Economic Development Tools

3. Economic Programming Recommendations and Feasibility

- A. Review and Summary of Plans Focused on Greenbelt's Economic Development
- B. Economic Development Needs
- C. Economic Development Programming Options
- D. Top Three Recommended Programming Options
- E. Cost Benefit Analysis of Recommended Programming Options
- F. Implementation Plan for Recommended Programming Options

APPENDIX

1. A Competitive Assessment of the Greenbelt Community as an Economic Development Entity

A. Evaluation Methodology

HCDC conducted 50+ selected psychographic interviews or visits with a swath of self-identifying Greenbelters: political leaders, stakeholders, community members, civic groups and City staff. HCDC staff also visited various Greenbelt locations and observed scores more individuals in various social venues: public meetings, offices, restaurants, malls and farmers' markets. Comparison of these confidential interviews, along with observed public discourse, revealed important commonalities in the life arcs of most Greenbelters interviewed; critical contradictions within and across groups within the Greenbelt community were also suggested and bear consideration.

Why analyze economic identity?

Scholarly and analytic branches of economics, sociology, and psychology have explored how "*Identity*" can and does affect economic transactions and the climate in which parties act upon the economic life of a community.¹ Understanding some of the dynamics in which self-identification influences economic behavior and economic drivers can deepen one's approach to strategically addressing economic conditions: from the impact of group discrimination on personal income (a highly detrimental influence); to how collective bargaining affects the economic productivity of classes of workers; or how collective political action affects development outcomes. Our staff sought to get a more intimate perspective on how community members relate to their City and thus influence its economic climate.

In small business marketing, one term for getting to know your stakeholders or customers is psychographics: a study of personal characteristics, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles. Data is typically gathered through surveys, face-to-face interviews, personal or employee observations or focus groups as well as background demographic information. Staff gathered a great deal of demographic information for the Small Business Toolkit from the American Communities Survey, US Census data, and prior Greenbelt studies.

¹ Akerlof, G. A., & Kranton, R. E. (2000). Economics and identity. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 115, 715-753.

1. A Competitive Assessment of the Greenbelt Community as an Economic Development Entity

B. Economic Identity Summary

Observations

1. *Greenbelt residents stay in both vocal and quiet possession of their community, even across the differentiable “Three Greenbelts” referenced in the Sage Economic Development Strategy Proposal.*

The narrative commonalities from our pool of respondents and interviewees relate to how younger, career-starting individuals and families that were initially attracted to the ease of commuting to work from Greenbelt, and / or the consistent affordability of housing options along an evolving spectrum of life-cycle needs, got hooked on the Greenbelt community identity. An overwhelming majority of our respondents have grown into an identity that is deeply defined by some or many unique aspects of Greenbelt’s municipal and social life. Some respondents suggested a “Greenbelt identity” was even an inheritable trait, passed-on through generational associations, recruitment, and sustained membership in the multitude of civic and social organizations that the city is replete with.

Deepening engagements in the schools, co-ops, recreation groups, local committees, homeowner’s associations, social and environmental groups, and arts organizations lead to a community vesting that yields a pervasive perspective. It seems as if, throughout the Greenbelt community, - whether considering its parks, its quiet neighborhoods, certain underperforming commercial centers, trails and byways, community centers, businesses or public spaces, transit or obstructive state highways - these facets of the community, both the positive and the negative, all *belong* to Greenbelters. The sense of resident ownership of the community’s amenities and resources is intense, laying the potential groundwork for the strongest kinds of community engagement regarding their disposition.

2. *As a result of this pervasive sentiment: for anything substantial to happen, or to change in Greenbelt, the consent of its residents is expected to be elicited.* Residents expect and receive a high level of local government engagement from their leaders and municipal staff, whether the affected sphere may be public or private in nature. This sense of belonging: in both the possessive sense: “*it belongs to us/me*” and in the associative sense of the word, as in “*We/I belong here,*” leads many in Greenbelt to see their status quo as extremely desirable. In conjunction with the higher levels of municipal service associated with Greenbelt, many respondents observe that Greenbelt is *a naturally occurring retirement community: a “NORC.”*

Continuity of residence is a strong likelihood in Greenbelt. Enlistment in the Greenbelt way of democratically-engaged, closely-planned governance lends itself to a lifelong commitment.

Due to this community allegiance and many other unique cooperative and vesting properties, and its resultant high quality of life:

3. *Greenbelt is a community where, by and large, its residents commit more strongly to their community identity than in other area municipalities.* This is a phenomenon observed within both tenant and homeowner groups. Residents may constantly seek community engagement and improvement as technical knowledge and environmental philosophies evolve, and activists' availability waxes and wanes; but paradoxically, in Greenbelt, change to the built environment comes very slowly.

High planning standards, respect for the historicity of the community, and a desire to maintain the high quality of life contribute to the City's conservative approach to growth. Growth and density are perceived to threaten an important basis of the Greenbelt identity, namely its sense of place. Resident advocates for some measures of local growth and economic development refer to a "*Fortress Greenbelt*" mentality in response to the resistance to infill development and prospective increases to commercial or residential densities, where proposed, except that placed proximate to the Greenbelt Metro Station.

These values associated with the *Greenbelt identity* give both strength to communal life and represent a challenge for the municipality as it copes with its fluctuating tax base and current estimated 31% office vacancy rate.² As Greenbelt considers and addresses its economic development policies and programming, the Mayor, Council, and City Manager should take note that where economic development services are offered in municipalities in Prince George's County, those staff responsible for its implementation perceive and unanimously identify citizen opposition to development as a significant barrier to attaining economic development goals.

Therefore, given the civic culture in Greenbelt, it is imperative that the City build a consensus for its economic develop and redevelopment plans well in advance of attempting to undertake them.

² WASHINGTON METRO AREA MARKET WATCH, MAY 2016, Transwestern

1. A Competitive Assessment of the Greenbelt Community as an Economic Development Entity

C. Greenbelt Value Propositions

Notwithstanding the observations above, the value proposition of being a resident of Greenbelt is high, and starts with:

- A powerful sense of community and neighborliness,
- Extensive community and political engagement,
- Superior recreational and cultural facilities and services,
- A welcoming, intimately planned human scale to Historic Greenbelt and the Roosevelt Center,
- Strategic proximity to transit, rail, trails, and well-placed highway facilities: serving for an advantageous commute and regional connectivity,
- Abundant, welcoming civic and nonprofit community programming,
- Relatively affordable housing with respect to the region,
- Community-engaged, well-regarded public schools,
- Pro-active community-oriented policing serving quiet, safe neighborhoods,
- An engaging, membership-oriented, cooperative-driven local culture, and
- Responsive governance.

As a place to live, Greenbelt stands out as a highly desirable destination to most, but not all, demographic cohorts. Actively marketing the high quality of life, Greenbelt's deep concentration of community amenities, and its high levels of community engagement across the region will fill a critical missing element in building the economic development capacity of the City. Recruiting new residents, in concert with diversification and expansion of housing opportunities, will increase Greenbelt's visibility and ensure that the City can remain competitive in the regional marketplace.

2. Inventory of Municipal Tools

HCDC staff took an inventory of municipal tools used by Prince George's County municipalities for economic development purposes. We focused our efforts on municipalities in the northern area of the County, and on those with active economic development staff. The inventory is in two parts: a website review, followed by a breakdown of grants, tax incentives, programs, and other techniques being used to support economic development goals.

A. Website Review

We reviewed the websites of all the municipalities in Prince George's County, but focused on those with full-time economic staff. We examined the content of their sites, the ease of accessing relevant information, whether the website successfully displayed economic development information. We also reviewed the City of Greenbelt's website.

Websites were evaluated based on the following categories: **Marketing & Tourism, Business Support**, and **Planning & Programming**. These 3 elements are crucial factors in any successful economic development strategy and should be addressed, to the fullest degree possible, in a municipal website.

Marketing & Tourism covers any information that visitors to the area might need – business data, dining, events, information about parking, and getting to and from. Information should be clear and concise; meant as a marketing tool and not as in-depth source of information, which can be reserved for other parts of the site that are primarily geared towards residents or investors.

Business Support covers the needs of the business community, including communications about business associations, tax information, any municipal programs or incentives, and information about permits and licensing. The transparency of the website, and the ease of accessing information, ensures businesses that support and assistance is available and encourages business owners to self-help using the site.

Planning & Programming information is essential for attracting new investment. Community plans lay out clear goals for the future, and include programs that facilitate the implementation of these goals. For example, a planning goal could be the revitalization of an older business district. The zoning for the district should be set up to promote business opportunity and enable a mix of business uses to ensure maximum ability to attract tenants. Complimentary programming, such as a commercial façade program or a business tax incentive, can then be instituted as programming support. Having as much of this information available online provides developers, investors, and prospective business owners with important research tools. Coordinating the presentation of this information sends a powerful signal that the community is serious about accomplishing its planning goals.

Individual aspects of each website were graded on the following scale:

Check Minus

Exists, but not easily accessible
Not user friendly

Check

Accessible
User friendly
Good quality

Check Plus

Easily Accessible
Very User friendly
Great quality

The following page shows the Matrix Results.

	Hyattsville	Mount Rainier	College Park	New Carrollton	Laurel	Bowie	Greenbelt*
MARKETING & TOURISM							
Business Directory		✓ +	✓ +			✓	
Dining Directory			✓ +	✓ -			
Arts & Entertainment Programming	✓		✓ +			✓	✓
Event Calendar	✓ +	✓ +	✓ +	✓	✓		✓
Parking & Directions	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Municipal Map	✓ +	✓	✓ +	✓	✓ +	✓ +	✓
Transit Info	✓ -	✓	✓ +			✓	✓
BUSINESS SUPPORT							
Business Home Page	✓ +	✓ +		✓ -		✓ +	
Links to Permits	✓ +	✓ +	✓ +	✓	✓		✓ -
Links to Licenses	✓ +	✓	✓ +	✓	✓ +		✓
Code Info	✓ +	✓ +	✓		✓	✓ +	✓
Zoning Info	✓	✓ +			✓ +		
Staff Contact	✓ +	✓	✓ +	✓ -		✓	✓
Municipal Tax Credits	✓ +		✓		✓ -		
Other Municipal Incentives							
City Data & Demographics	✓ +	✓ -	✓			✓	✓ -
Vacant Property Database							
Real Estate Resources						✓ +	
Newsletter	✓	✓	✓ -		✓	✓ +	✓
Market Data or Analyses		✓ -	✓			✓	
Business Association(s)		✓	✓				
Links to Resources/Guide			✓ +		✓	✓	✓
Links to Grants/Loans	✓ +		✓		✓	✓ +	
Business Workshops							
PLANNING & PROGRAMMING							
Econ Dev Plan or Report			✓ +		✓		✓ -
Municipal or Area Plan	✓ +	✓ +	✓ +		✓	✓ +	✓
Other Financial Programs			✓ +		✓	✓	
Façade Programs	✓		✓				

Prior to the implementation of the Business Toolkit, in comparison with other municipalities' websites in terms of readily-available business and economic development information, Greenbelt fell in the middle. The City's website had a large amount of information to provide, but some of the information was hard to find and there was no clear section dedicated to business activity. HCDC and Greenbelt staff have working together to re-design part of the website menu to include a Business section, consolidate business-related information, and bring to the forefront information that is relevant to developers, visitors, and those outside the City wishing to learn more.

*Please note that the initial assessment of the Greenbelt website was taken before the updates to the website were completed as a part of HCDC's contract to provide a Business Toolkit for the City. Refer to the Appendix for an updated assessment of the website.

2. Inventory of Municipal Tools

B. Program Snapshots

During the review process of municipal websites, we researched and catalogued the following tools and information that reflect the goals and activities of the various economic development efforts related to supporting the business community. The following narrative delves into each municipality's activities and all information is publicly accessible.

i. College Park

The City of College Park has had a longstanding and active economic development department, a subset of their planning department. They developed the SHOP College Park website, a very effective promotional tool for businesses in the City and an easy-to-use platform for consumers. They also offer a variety of grant programs for local, small businesses including façade and interior build out grants. Most recently, the City – in partnership with the University of Maryland, established an Innovation District to support and encourage growth in this business sector, ultimately strengthening the entire business community in the City.

Permits & Licensing
City Non-Residential Occupancy Permit <i>Annual, includes inspection of property</i>
Building & Construction Permit <i>Must be obtained along with County permit</i>
Sign Permit
Business Programming, Outreach & Tools
SHOP College Park <i>Promotional website for all CP businesses, run by the City's Economic Development staff</i>
Business Resource Guide <i>How-to Guide for starting a business in CP</i>
Grants
Business & Multi-Family Apartment Recycling Grant Program <i>Funding for businesses to start or expand recycling programs that meet County requirements</i>
Business Retention Fund <i>Up to \$5,000 for leasehold improvements of existing, locally-owned retail businesses</i>
Retail Attraction & Expansion Fund <i>Up to \$25,000 in leasehold improvements to new or expanding retail businesses, with a focus on filling retail gaps</i>

Hollywood Commercial Façade Improvement Program <i>Created to invigorate the Hollywood Commercial District</i>
Commercial Tenant Improvement Program <i>Up to \$25,000 in leasehold improvements to commercial retail space</i>
Tax Credits
Revitalization Tax Credit Program <i>Qualifying projects are eligible to receive a 5 year tax credit on city real property taxes</i>
Innovation District <i>Tax Credit of at least 50% (1st year) to qualifying businesses, 10% (2nd-5th year)</i>
Committees
Advisory Planning Commission <i>Conduct hearings on development applications requesting variance from County zoning standards, make recommendations to the Mayor & Council on development applications; land-use issues and plans; grant requests and capital improvements; and may develop a long-range comprehensive plan for the City as directed by the Mayor and Council</i>

ii. Hyattsville

The City of Hyattsville did not provide any business-related programming other than grant programs and incentives, but is considering expanding their efforts in the future, according to their current Director of Economic and Community Development. The City has successfully run multiple Commercial Façade Improvement Programs over the years which have, in most cases, resulted in significant improvement of the location and/or tenancy of the building (if not occupied at the time of application). The City has also utilized its recently adopted Revitalization Tax Credit to finance a significant previously phased project whose timely completion at University Town Center (a mixed-use town center whose commercial and residential marketplace stalled and collapsed as a result of the mortgage finance crisis and subsequent recession of 2007) to benefit the community.

Permits & Licensing
Business License <i>Annual license with inspection</i>
Alcoholic Beverage Sales License <i>20% of County fee</i>
Grants
Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program <i>Dollar-for-dollar matching grant of up to \$45,000 funded through Community Legacy grant</i>
Tax Credits
Revitalization Tax Credit <i>Financial incentives for economic development and redevelopment in 3 revitalization districts</i>

Committees
Planning Committee <i>Reviews incoming development proposals and submits recommendations to Council</i>

iii. Bowie

Unlike many other incorporated municipalities in Prince George's County, the City of Bowie does *not* have a business license requirement of its own. It does maintain a building permit program in order to review and track development within the City, but prefers to let businesses only go through the County system. The Business Incubator, which was an initiative from the City that has now become its own nonprofit, in partnership with Bowie State University, is a recent enterprise that fosters entrepreneurs and innovators in their first stages of business development and serves the greater area of Prince George's County. The City's main strategy for growing the tax base has been strategic annexation of unincorporated parcels; some of these are developed into residential communities and some into commercial complexes, and each contributes to the City's annual tax revenue and ultimately, the City budget.

Permits & Licensing
Building Permit <i>All efforts requiring County permit also require City permit</i>
Business Programming, Outreach & Tools
Business Incubator <i>Conceived by City and now managed by non-profit in partnership with Bowie State University</i>
Grants
Commercial Façade Improvement Grant <i>Past program run for businesses in Bowie's Historic District</i>
Loans
Revolving Business Loan Fund <i>For new or expanding businesses, as determined by staff and Mayor</i>
Committees
Economic Development Committee

iv. Laurel

As the only municipality in Prince George's County with separate zoning authority, Laurel is unique. Most permits are processed by the City, but water, sewer, and stormwater permits are processed by the County. The City has developed a range of funding opportunities for small businesses, particularly to support its efforts to revitalize the City's Main Street, and these efforts largely have been successful. Additionally, Laurel uses overlay zones that are closely coordinated with accompanying tax benefits to incentivize redevelopment in primary commercial areas to mixed-use centers. To that end, the Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) was created as a separate entity and adequately funded with a mission to create additional economic development opportunities through multiple techniques, such as:

purchasing vacant lots and converting to parking for Main Street area; purchasing vacant buildings and renovating to sell, and/or issuing well defined redevelopment RFQs and RFPs. While the CRA takes its mandate from City defined goals, it has the flexibility to work in ways the municipality cannot, coordinating with private sector marketing agents in order to achieve the City's economic development goals.

Permits & Licensing
<p>Business Permit <i>Annual license with inspection for certain enterprises</i></p> <p>Building & Development Permit* <i>All types of construction except for stormwater management</i></p> <p>Sign Permit <i>For permanent commercial and advertising signage and temporary/event signage</i></p> <p>*Laurel is unique it has separate zoning jurisdiction from Prince George's County.</p>
Business Programming, Outreach & Tools
<p>Main Street Messenger <i>Monthly newsletter with events, new businesses, and updates on revitalization</i></p>
Grants
<p>Main Street Relocation Grant Program <i>Reimbursement of up to \$10,000 to eligible business to relocate to Main Street</i></p> <p>Main Street Grant Sign Program <i>Up to \$2,500 match for improvements to signage on commercial Main Street buildings</i></p> <p>Main Street Retail Storefront Façade Improvement Program <i>Up to \$10,000 reimbursement for façade improvements on ground floor retail</i></p> <p>Main Street Commercial Property Improvement Program <i>Reimburses new or expanding tenants for their leasehold improvements or interior fit-outs</i></p>
Tax Credits
<p>Revitalization and Economic Development Tax Credit <i>Applies to certain areas under overlay zones</i></p>
Committees
<p>Planning Commission <i>Holds public hearings on all matters related to development and zoning within the City</i></p> <p>Community Redevelopment Authority <i>City's principal development/redevelopment authority with a focus on creating additional economic development opportunities for property owners within the City</i></p>
Other

Foreclosure Registration Program

Goal is to aid the City in identifying responsible parties of foreclosed properties and increase code compliance on said properties

v. Mount Rainier

Although a small municipality, Mount Rainier's Economic Development Department has recently become very active. Mt. Rainier offers a range of business programming, and is one of the few municipalities that specifically states its office is available to discuss general business inquiries (although most municipalities do respond to these questions, not all state this explicitly on their website). They recently hired an economic development coordinator who has been instrumental in modifying the City's website to provide economic development information and creating several new grant program opportunities for local businesses.

Permits & Licensing

Business License

Annual license with inspection, plus Mount Rainier Business Association fees (optional)

Building Permit

Required for all projects that also need a County permit

Property Registration

Required for vacant lots or buildings

Business Programming, Outreach & Tools

Mount Rainier Business Association

Mission is to enhance the economic viability of Mount Rainier

Business Locator Map

Increase visibility of local businesses; all licensed business can be found on the map

Business Friendly Survey

Recently implemented survey to assess business needs and ways City can assist local enterprises

General Business Assistance

City responds to calls for assistance from businesses on varying topics

Business License Quick Guide

Short doc outlining license process

Grants

Town Center Business Attraction and Expansion Program

Matching funds up to \$10,000 for businesses located in MUTC

Committees

Economic Development Committee

Economic Development Workgroup

vi. New Carrollton

The City of New Carrollton has not been able to match the economic development efforts of other municipalities with dedicated staff, or at the very least, the City’s website does not reflect all the efforts that staff may be undertaking. With the New Carrollton Metro Station in an unincorporated portion of the County, the City faces jurisdictional challenges to implementing its goals.

Permits & Licensing
Business License <i>Annual license with inspection</i>
Grants
New Carrollton Revitalization Fund and Incentives <i>Financial assistance and matching funds for business relocating to City</i>

vii. Greenbelt

When compared with other municipalities, especially those with robust business communities and larger municipal governments, Greenbelt is permit/license heavy with no business-focused programming, financial incentives, or outreach.

Permits & Licensing
Commercial Occupancy License <i>All businesses in the City require a Commercial Occupancy License</i>
Liquor License
Building & Construction Permit <i>Any efforts requiring a County permit also require a City permit</i>
Sign Permit <i>All signage projects requiring a County permit also require a City permit</i>
Alarm Permit <i>All alarm systems must be registered and permitted with the City</i>
Committees
Advisory Planning Board <i>Meets monthly to provide Council with feedback on development activities, zoning, codes, etc.</i>

2. Inventory of Municipal Tools

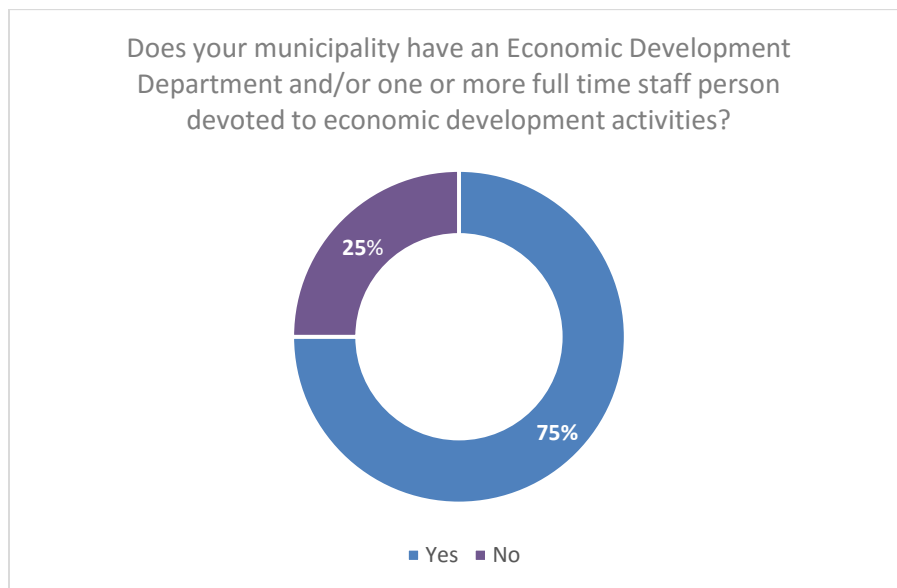
C. Economic Development Services Survey

Purpose: In order to compare the City of Greenbelt’s economic development capacity and current initiatives, HCDC distributed a survey to Prince George’s County municipalities with active economic development staff to better understand successful tools and strategies being utilized in the area.

Methodology: An initial online survey was designed using Google Forms and sent via email to all participants. It contained 11 questions, some short answer, some selected choice, some multiple choice, and one ranking question. The questions were designed to glean basic information about the municipality’s economic development programming, funding resources, and overall thoughts on factors that could affect the success or failure of any programming. The survey answers were used as quantifiable data, and as a baseline to more specific questions that were asked in a follow-up interview. These answers are more qualitative in nature.

Results & Discussion: The results of the online survey revealed that all of the municipalities, whether or not they had a full-time economic development staff person, had a written economic development plan.

Figure 1

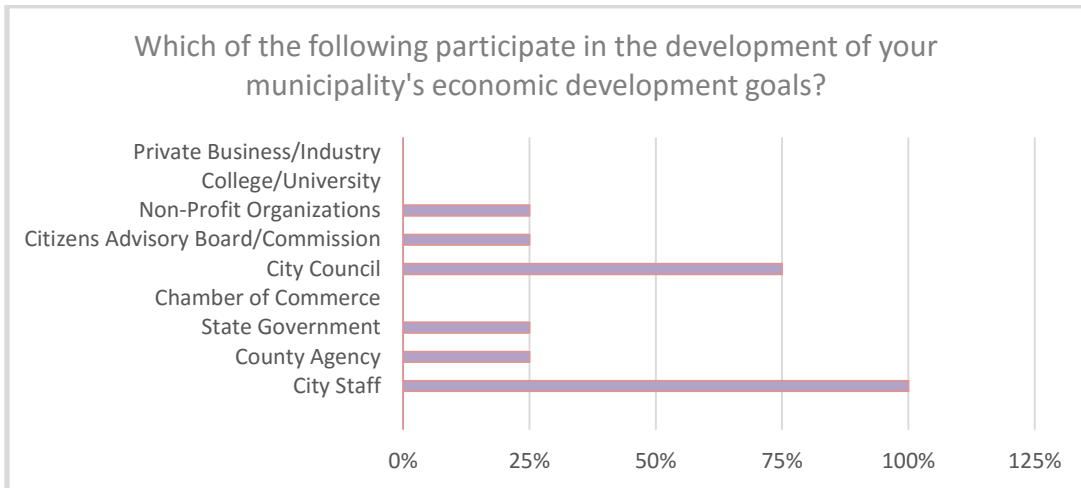


In some cases, the plan was folded into an existing planning document which covered more than just economic development; in other cases, it was a standalone document.

Not surprisingly, all respondents had City Council and Staff listed as participants in the development of municipal economic goals (Figure 2). However, fewer listed any citizen advisory boards or other government agencies as participants, and none listed any private business or

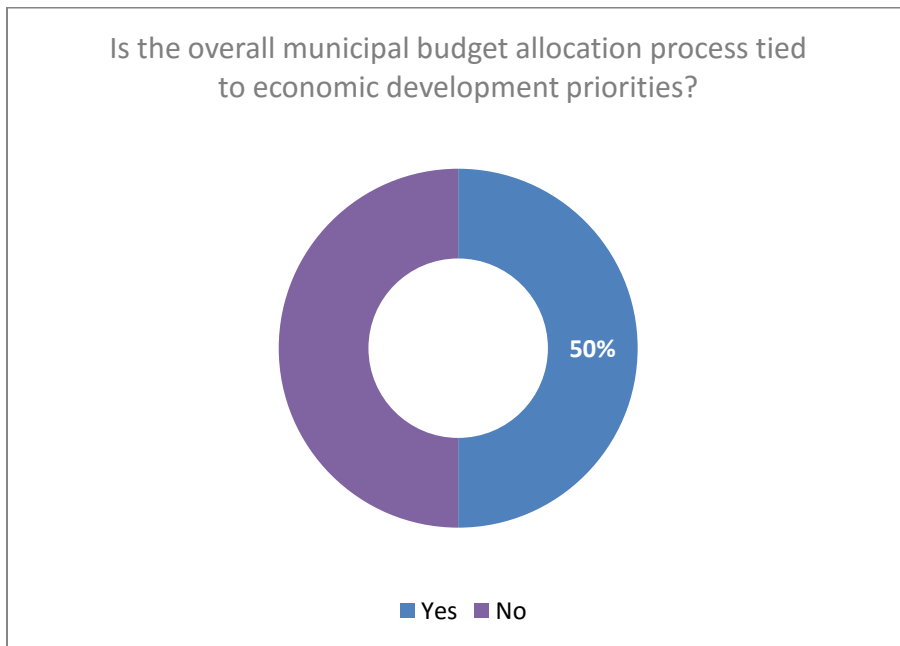
chamber of commerce participation. During follow up questioning, respondents working within a City Manager form of government reported a strong level of input and guidance from staff as the main directive in the development of economic goals.

Figure 2



Half of the respondents indicated that the municipal budget process was tied to economic development priorities.

Figure 3



Respondents reported a varying range of economic development budgets. In follow-up interviews, it was determined the definition of “economic development funding” - apart from salary allocation – varied across respondents, with no uniform methodology apparent. Some considered any funding for public infrastructure improvements under economic development,

and thus had larger budgets; while others defined the budget as only pertaining to programming with “economic development” in the title, regardless of whether or not they implemented other programming that could be considered economic development. Attempting to compare municipal budgets to determine the extent or degree of programming or commitment to economic development yielded little intelligence of value about the effectiveness of the services provided.

The majority of funding for economic development programming came from the local government’s revenues/general fund, and many also used state and county grants to supplement programming funds.

The types of programming implemented varied across respondents. The following were identified as commonly utilized programming, policy, and/or strategies:

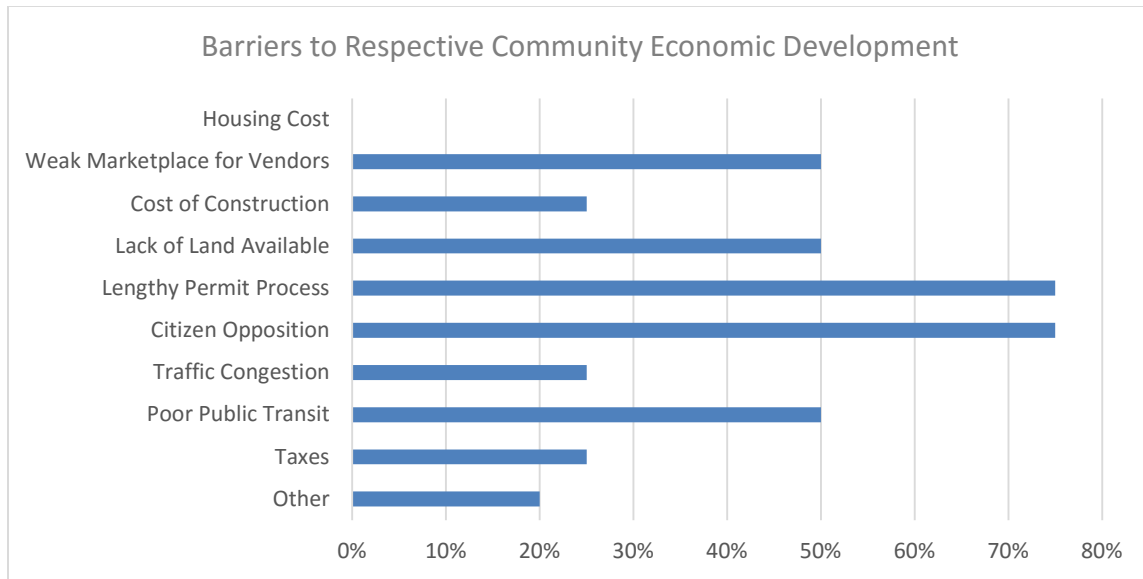
Table 1

BUSINESS SUPPORT	INCENTIVE	DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT	FORMAL PROGRAM
Needs Survey of Local Businesses	Revitalization Tax Credits	Development Facilitation	Business Recruitment
Marketing Assistance	Tax Credits (Other)	Public/Private Partnerships	Commercial Façade Improvement Grants
Business Incubator	Tourism/event sponsorships	Site Selection	Improvement Grants (Other)
Merchants Association			Main Street Program

Commercial Façade Improvement Grants was the most commonly reported program. The provision of County and State funding for these grants, as well as the prevalence of the program nationally, make it an easy option for municipalities to obtain funding and implement.

Respondents were also asked to select, from a given list, the factors they considered barriers to economic development in their community. The most commonly chosen factors were Citizen Opposition and Lengthy Permit Process. We had anticipated the latter as a potential issue, based on local, first-hand experiences with development in the area; the near 100% selection of Citizen Opposition speaks to the power and influence of organized residents.

Figure 4



Finally, respondents were given a series of elements and were asked to report their negative or positive influence on economic development in their community (Table 2 – next page).

Table 2

	Very Negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive
Recreation Opportunities			● ●	● ●	
Quality of Life				● ● ●	●
Environmental Quality			●	● ● ●	
Community Safety				● ●	● ●
Economic Growth Potential				● ●	● ●
Availability of Capital		●	●	● ●	
Medical Facilities		● ●	●	●	
Population Density			● ● ●	●	
Access to Markets and Customers				● ● ● ●	
Shopping Facilities		●	●	● ●	
Sustainability			● ●	● ●	
Cost of Living		●	● ●		●
Public Education System	●	●	● ●		
Community Attitudes			● ●	● ●	
Growth Management Policies			●	●	● ●
Affordable Housing		●	● ●		●
Workforce Availability		●		● ● ●	
Cost of Doing Business		● ●	●	●	
Transportation System		●	●	● ●	
Availability of Land	●		● ●	●	
Traffic Congestion		● ●	● ●		
Utilities Cost	●		● ●	●	
Infrastructure			● ● ● ●		
Availability of Technology		●	● ●	●	
Parking	●	●	● ●		

Interestingly, Community Attitudes were listed as having a Neutral or Positive effect; it's possible that listing the item as Community Attitude instead of Community Opposition changed the way respondents reacted to it. Or, as we found in some follow-up interviews, respondents drew upon their past experiences with Community Opposition to define it as a barrier to economic development, but thought that the current communities they worked in did not have those same attitudes and in fact were contributing to and supportive of growth.

Respondents listed Quality of Life, Community Safety, and Economic Growth Potential as Very Positive influences on economic development. These factors are also very marketable to new residents and new businesses, which can in turn contribute to a positive feedback loop. Respondents also listed Access to Markets and Customers as a positive effect. Prince George's County's close proximity to the District of Columbia, Annapolis, and Baltimore provides many

opportunities to attract multiple types of consumers. Capitalizing on these market forces will be key to success and economic vitality.

Respondents pointed to factors like Parking, Cost of Doing Business, Traffic Congestion, and the Public Education System as negative factors. During further discussion, respondents indicated that perceptions of the Public Education System in the County were detrimental to attracting larger industries to relocate.

During the follow-up interviews, respondents were asked a series of base questions, customized according to their survey responses, to gather additional insight about goals and strategies for achieving economic development. Table 3 lists the Goals discussed by respondents and the strategies used to achieve those goals.

Table 3

GOAL	Preserve & Increase Non-Residential Tax Base
STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively recruit private development • Utilize incentives, such as permit assistance and tax credits • Streamline licensing process for construction and businesses • Annex new land, where possible
GOAL	Promote Revitalization of Commercial Areas
STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use creative parking solutions – such as a shared parking district – to ease parking burden on businesses • Façade Improvement Grants: start with credible partners and start simple to gain traction • Create Overlay Zone to allow mix of uses • Release preliminary RFP or RFQ to gauge and encourage private market response
GOAL	Decrease Commercial Vacancy
STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support or provide business programming, such as a Merchant’s Association, Technical Workshops, or a Business Incubator • Develop loan fund to support business relocation or development
GOAL	Encourage In-fill Development
STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify zoning to increase density and expand allowable uses • Use municipal infrastructure investment as a catalyst/incentive for developers • Establish TIF districts to support projects, where needed

GOAL	Ensure Equitable Growth
STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include affordable housing component in new residential development, ex. MPDU in Montgomery County • Develop strong community vision for developer's to adhere to • Include vision in any RFP's or RFQ's to guide development

Conclusions: Municipalities with the most successful programming had the following in common: 1) a clearly defined goal or set of goals for economic development, and 2) multi-point strategies in place to pursue the realization of stated goal(s). The goals were either articulated specifically on the website or through planning documents and other reports and studies. Staff reported being given clear mandates and legislative support to pursue the articulated municipal vision. Interviews revealed that many municipalities were in direct contact with regional brokers and real estate agents to help extend their message and attract new investment.

3. Economic Programming Recommendations and Feasibility

A. Review and Summary of Past Plans

The City of Greenbelt has at least five prior published sources assessing and recommending aspects of economic development policy, operations, and programming. All have relevant, actionable, and timely recommendations to offer. The sources HCDC studied in addition to our own research were:

- *The Greener Greenbelt Initiative's Roosevelt Center Focus Session* conducted in conjunction with the University of Maryland's Architecture Program
(2007)
- *The Sustainability Plan Framework for the City of Greenbelt* from the Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability
(2013)
- *The Organizational Assessment Final Report* from the Matrix Consulting Group
(2013)
- *The Greenbelt Metro Area Sector Plan* from MNCPPC, Department of Planning
(2013)
- *An Economic Development Strategy for Greenbelt, MD* from the Sage Policy Group
(2015)

Those recommendations have been condensed, simplified, categorized, and entered into tabular form for easy comparison, along with HCDC's recommendations.

The first of HCDC's Preliminary Set of Action Recommendations for the FY 2017 Budget³ calls for the Mayor and Council to work with Staff to legislatively define, prioritize, and communicate its desired economic development outcomes, and establish those considerations in the context of other related departmental functions, such as prioritizing infrastructure improvements, or balancing development plan review recommendations against economic development outcomes. It is the necessary first step to undertake and will undergird and critically shape all other economic development activity considerations to be addressed.

In light of this proposed action, we strongly recommend reviewing, considering, and adopting certain economic development policies from these or other known past professional advisements, in addition to those issued in this report. If and when Mayor and Council decide to clarify their policy aims and expectations for the staff implementation of its operations, and any subsequent economic development related activities, they should draw from as many perspectives and sources of expertise as they have available.

³ The HCDCs Preliminary Set of Action Recommendations for the FY 2017 Budget were previously delivered to Staff via email, and are located in the Appendix to this report.

The *Greener Greenbelt Initiative's Roosevelt Center Focus Session* features a study of a possible municipally-led, in-fill development project meant to energize the Historic Greenbelt commercial center and enhance its infrastructure and public spaces. It outlined a pathway to create more contemporary housing options; more downtown vitality; improved use of public resources; and was heavily influenced by the paradigms of sustainability.

With respect to economic development, *The Sustainability Plan Framework for the City of Greenbelt* emphasizes the importance of the role of public transit and the reliance for positive economic development outcomes on the effective provision of transit services and offering diverse transit options.

The Matrix Group's *Organizational Assessment* features a proposal for the staff adoption of certain economic development functions, initially as a contracted service, and then transitioning over time to a full time staffing recommendation. That position would ultimately merge marketing and promotional communication functions for the City with the responsibility for economic development programming and grant acquisition and management. HCDC found this approach very feasible, as it provides for transition and builds capacity simultaneously. Additionally, the linkage between effective economic development outcomes and community promotion is very direct.

The Greenbelt Metro Area Sector Plan contains a higher altitude set of recommendations, a set of philosophies, with the exception of specific, and obvious land use recommendations that would ultimately affect the market mix of the Greenbelt commercial corridors surrounding the Metro Station. The City has long ago embraced Smart Growth principles, but the recommendations are worthwhile to consider for the adoption of policies and plans that focus specifically on aspects of future economic development in addition to land usage.

The recommendations outlined in the executive summary of Sage Policy Group's *An Economic Development Strategy for Greenbelt, MD*, comprise a very limited strategy, given the community needs their very thorough and comprehensive analysis revealed. The approach is a set of loosely coordinated, basic economic development tasks, but without any roll out or implementation support or cost benefit considerations attached. The recommendation for "Support of Owner-Occupied Housing Development in Greenbelt East and West," is solidly anchored in an excellent contextual analysis of Greenbelt's current state and heavily backed by demographic information, but it is not clear what the scale of effort required on the part of the City might be to effectively influence the marketplace, or whether the economic feasibility of private sector efforts to add owner-occupied housing products to form mixed-use sites at current commercial-use only areas even exists to support this strategy element. Many interim steps are required to roll out an effective implementation of this particular recommendation.

Greenbelt has a wealth of excellent guiding principles and policy perspectives to source in coming up with its own direction and priorities.

3.A. Summary of Recommendations

SOURCE	YEAR	RECOMMENDATIONS						
		Legislative Policy: Mayor & Council	Organizational Operations: City Staff	Business Support & Programming	Development Approaches	Influencing the Commercial Marketplace	Influencing the Housing Marketplace	Infrastructure Enhancements
HYATTSVILLE CDC	2016	Legislatively defining desired economic development outcomes to provide staff direction and clarity for priorities	Reallocation of Planning staff activity to incorporate economic development considerations	Small business outreach and support programming	Municipally-Guided Pilot Development	Actively promote Greenbelt in the marketplace through engagement w/ commercial brokers, owners, employers	Recruit for limited scope demolition and upscale redevelopment of strategic Springhill Lake apartment blocks	
SAGE POLICY GROUP	2015	Reconsider previous redevelopment plans at Beltway Plaza	Reconsider previous redevelopment plans at Beltway Plaza	Provide tax breaks to catalyze rejuvenation of older commercial areas	Strive for change of ownership at Roosevelt Center		Support owner-occupied housing development in Greenbelt East & West	
GREENBELT METRO AREA SECTOR PLAN	2013	Establish policies to attract quality businesses and a better mix of businesses	Establish strategies to attract quality businesses and a better mix of businesses		Focus on community-scaled business investment & providing pedestrian-oriented elements & amenities	Eliminate unattractive & incompatible heavy industrial uses in the Sector Plan Area		Implement Smart Growth and County growth policies & plans that promote compact, TOD near rail stations.
			Continue to identify economic assets & market strengths. Explore public & private sector financial and technical assistance programs.		Implement a revitalization strategy for mature commercial areas	Attract high-tech-based companies to the County Economic Development Corporation's "High-Tech Triangle"		
						Market the vision & goals of the Sector Plan by promoting new transit-oriented mixed-use centers and residential linked to the wider community, having high quality design & identity & establish a sense of place.		
MATRIX CONSULTING GROUP: ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT	2013		Pursue an economic development initiative w/ sufficient resources. In near-term, growth of capacity should focus on use of a contract service provider. Effort may shift to a dedicated staffer over time to more cost effectively continue & expand efforts.					
			Create a new position in the longer term: Director of External Relations to provide comprehensive, coordinated effort in areas of grant management, communication & economic development.					

SOURCE	YEAR	RECOMMENDATIONS						
		Legislative Policy: Mayor & Council	Organizational Operations: City Staff	Business Support: Programming	Development Approaches	Influencing the Commercial Marketplace	Influencing the Housing Marketplace	Strategic Infrastructure Enhancements
SUSTAINABILITY PLAN	2013	Support economic vitality through local businesses; green jobs / businesses; being an incubator of ideas/research; and supporting the tax base.						
UMD/GHI: GREENER GREENBELT	2007	Foster a community-wide process to establish development goals for the Roosevelt Center	Define an economically viable approach to redevelopment of the Roosevelt Center	Develop a market study of retail opportunities for the Roosevelt Center	Pursue projects in partnership with the City on its land (there is +/-170,000 square feet of parking lot alone)	Engage the Center's owners more fully and explore options to increase local ownership of Center properties	Consider having people living above/around Roosevelt Center. Make the space more active	Improve street furniture, urban infrastructure, lighting, kiosks, banners, murals, etc. to provide coherence and comfort to paths, underpasses and open spaces.
				Pursue projects in partnership with the Roosevelt Center Merchants' Association	Develop the "urban design", architecture and landscape to support a sustainable, attractive, pedestrian, mixed-use, user-friendly Roosevelt Center	Pursue projects in partnership with the City on its land (+/-170,000 SF of parking lot alone). Foster investment in the Center by formulating & issuing RFPs to attract private developers		

3. Economic Programming Recommendations and Feasibility

B. Economic Development Needs in Greenbelt

Optimally, a municipality's economic development programming is predicated on its community's strategic needs and the Mayor and Council's planning priorities to address those needs. As a result, we see the most pressing economic development priority for the City is for the Mayor and Council to identify what it wants economic development outcomes to look like, and to adopt policy priorities that give staff and the private sector clear direction in implementing activities which deliver those outcomes. As our review of extant municipal economic development services and programming in Prince George's County revealed, a clearly defined goal or set of goals for economic development enabled the most effective programming to be delivered in other communities.

Many subsequent action steps will fall into place as a result of affirmative policymaking from the Mayor and Council. A caveat should be noted, though: meeting economic development needs through programming endeavors should also reflect and match the organizational capacity to deliver the programming in order to use resources effectively, and not overreach. With this in mind, the importance of partnerships and the recruitment of both local stakeholder and external investments cannot be overemphasized.

By its own recognition, as well as through multiple consultants' advisement, the City of Greenbelt has begun to address one of its historic, tactical weaknesses: an underutilized relationship with its business community. By developing new information and resources, and starting to provide business-oriented services and support, a more welcoming business climate may grow.

HCDC's earlier review of Greenbelt's current conditions revealed low-hanging fruit that could be addressed with the creation of the Greenbelt Business Toolkit. Our Competitive Assessment interview process has also yielded important feedback from residents and the business community regarding the pressing need for the City to continue to systematically build better, closer relationships with private employers, commercial property owners, the development community, and business owners throughout the City. The problems and challenges that these parties experience now or face in the future are certainly Greenbelt's problems as well. While some businesses can move away from problematic market conditions, a municipality - a community - is rooted and cannot. If the business community in Greenbelt were to experience a similar kind of community identification and engagement with the City's civic, social and cultural life as its residents do; a great deal of new energy, and investment could be unleashed.

Beyond the positive engagement and vesting of its business community, after considerable review, HCDC sees Greenbelt's three most pressing economic development needs as follows:

- Tax Base expansion/diversification
- Establishment of marketplace confidence in Greenbelt as an investment destination
- Grow Greenbelt's ability to recruit and attract employers and investment

In this report, we do not seek to reinvent the wheel, but combine our research and analyses with past recommendations to bring to bear a comprehensive look at economic development strategies the City can utilize. For example, the Sage *Strategy* document communicated 18-Weaknesses and 8-Threats from stakeholder input in its SWOT analysis. These points should also heavily inform the Mayor and Council's identification of the economic needs to be addressed by any future programming initiatives.

In turn, several of those community-articulated conditions pose problems for sustainability of the tax base, which, if not adequately addressed, will ultimately diminish the levels and mix of municipal services, the pace of infrastructure maintenance and investment, environmental compliance, and the overall quality of life for Greenbelters. These items include:

- Continued commercial vacancies, and incipient blight at underperforming commercial centers
- Climbing office vacancy rates (31%)
- Anemic tax base growth relative to emergent service demands
- Relatively less local private investment compared to similarly-scaled and comprised municipalities

Several of these issues are interrelated and overlap with other perceived and previously identified challenges that require an economic development approach to resolve.

The evolution regionally of competing instances of localized, inner-beltway commercial and retail capacity, as well as changes in shopping preferences over the past two decades, has seriously affected the market-share capture and viability of Beltway Plaza during the period. Once serving as a regional commercial center, it is now a center whose geographic draw continues to shrink. Shoring up local demand by growing a larger, residential customer base could be one approach to make that center more viable, competitive, and able to recruit new businesses that could address new, upscale demand preferences.

To further pull on a related thread, if the first Sage recommendation for support of new owner-occupied housing development is adopted as a policy goal or sought after as an economic development outcome, the approach could have salutary effects addressing multiple economic needs. The *Strategy* document asserted that new owner-occupied housing types will serve to attract younger families. The two principal shrinking age cohorts within Greenbelt to be recruited for are 20 -24 year olds and 35-44 year olds. With the mean age for first birth of a

child at 22.8 yrs. old among women 15-44, and 25.4 yrs. old among men 15-44⁴: having the housing that will be sought after by these cohorts in place will also be critical to restoring important spending drivers in the local economy since individuals in these age groups are approaching peak earning capacity. This is one instance to present how carefully selected programming activities can and should address multiple economic development needs.

⁴ 2011 -2013 National Survey for Family Growth, National Institute for Health Care Statistics

3. Economic Programming Recommendations and Feasibility

C. Economic Development Programming Options

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Business Incubator	Nurture start-ups to become viable. Local business development
Business Recruitment	Attract new businesses and lower vacancy rates
Commercial Façade Improvement Grant	Revitalize tired business exteriors, promote new investment, enhance tax base
Community Development Corporation	Activate a nonprofit revitalization agent and partner
Community Development Financial Institution Fund (CDFI)	Dedicates nonprofit small business lending institution funding, makes capital available to traditionally less attractive local borrowers
Community Land Trust	Converts persistently vacant buildings, lots or tracts of land into productive properties, often assisting low-income entrepreneurs
Development Facilitation	Induces faster blight rehabilitation, in-fill or new development
Employment Training	Improve skills for participating workers
Improvement Grants (Other)	Improves business appearances for interiors or other equipment, promote new investment, enhance tax base
Local Market Development	Creation and operating assistance for farmer's or other specialty marketplace
Loan Guarantees	Support start-up businesses or select development proposals
Main Street Program	Create a mechanism to implement mixed strategy approaches for stabilizing or revitalizing downtown areas
Market Research and Studies	Identification & analysis of competition, customer base, or area demand capacity & preferences
Marketing Assistance	Expand access to new customers for local business through various means, media & training (i.e. Restaurant Week promotional campaign)

C. Economic Development Programming Options (cont)

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Merchants Association	Giving greater voice & an advocacy platform for businesses
Promotional Marketing	Enhance the community's reputation as a destination. Establish local market presence in the regional marketplace. Brand and identity management
Public/Private Partnerships	Engage in collaborations to share risk, planning & financial resources for improved development outcomes or to solve complex or otherwise intractable problems
Retail Needs Survey	Identification of marketplace service gaps and needs for a locality
Revitalization Tax Credits	Lowers market entry or operating costs for targeted development
Site Selection	Provide for faster commercial tenancy/entry to market through information management, networking and better broker access
Small Business Outreach	Community building in the commercial sector
Small Business Technical Assistance	Enable entrepreneurs and extant merchants to have access to resources, networking, and specialized training opportunities tailored to their current needs; or to emergent marketplace or regulatory conditions: and to share the experiences of experts and their peers
Tax Credits, TIFs, and STDs	Enable lower market entry, operating, and financing costs generally. Obtaining the project-supporting infrastructure desired.
Tourism/event sponsorships	Provide for more exposure to extant & new customers for participants
Urban Renewal	Catalyze land use changes and eliminate blight
Workforce Development	Create pools of ready-to-hire, skilled workers for select industry/trades

Note: this list may not be exhaustively complete: many variations and combinations of these program options exist. The intent is to provide Greenbelt with a comprehensive look at its likely program options

Programs in Application

When a municipality is considering its economic development goals and its capacity to achieve them; it will discover that certain goals require or could benefit from a slew of coordinated programs to support or achieve the desired outcomes. As an example, take the Sage *Strategy*-recommended goal to “**support owner-occupied housing development in Greenbelt East and Greenbelt West.**” Programming activity to progress this goal could source from, but would not be limited to, any combination of the following economic development programs:

- CDFI
- Development Facilitation
- Market Research and Studies
- Public /Private Partnerships
- Site Selection
- Tax Credits
- Urban Renewal

A municipality might not have maturely developed programs in all these areas, but could choose to outsource expertise as needed to conduct a campaign to advance or achieve the goal. Having a housing market study on hand to establish or document sufficient product demand would help multiple land owners or developers demonstrate project viability to gain support for the financing of their project. Access to extant zoning maps, density studies, and ownership data could facilitate identifying developable tracts or candidates for likely-to-pass zoning amendments to assist land owners and developers in site selection.

Applicable tax credits tied to development consistent with the City’s goals could lower project costs. By sweetening a deal, marginal or riskier projects can be made viable. If affordable or cooperative housing development is in the picture, a strong relationship with an experienced community-oriented financial institution familiar with non-standard housing operating models could mean the difference between financing approval or rejection. Rarely does achieving an economic development goal fit neatly into any one program category.

3. Economic Programming Recommendations and Feasibility

D. Top Three Recommended Programming Options for Greenbelt for 2017

In consideration of the current stage of Greenbelt's economic development programming capacity, its current economic development needs, and the economic climate and competitive conditions throughout the region, HCDC staff recommends the following programming activities be addressed or commenced in FY 2017:

Small Business Outreach

To both promote and build upon the positive steps of community outreach that the Business Toolkit represents. This program activity addresses the need to build confidence in Greenbelt as a place to invest business resources and furthers Greenbelt's capacity to attract businesses and employers.

Development Facilitation

In the singular, not programmatic, form of a limited scope, municipally-guided pilot development project on publicly-owned land at Roosevelt Center: and set upon a phased RFQ/RFP platform. In carrying out and seeing through one modestly scoped project - from planning parameters to RFP selection to use and occupancy permitting - Greenbelt could address all three cited economic development needs, gain valuable experience, and build new and better relationships with the development community while addressing its long term economic and place-making interests .

Public/Private Partnership

Initiating a dialogue leading to the joint planning and cooperative implementation of municipally supported in-fill redevelopment at Beltway Plaza. Geared to the goal of ultimately achieving a mix of economically feasible new uses at Beltway Plaza. A partnership would infuse new energy, customer interest, and activity but also ground the project in adequate levels of jointly-supported connective infrastructure and pedestrian friendly amenities. This activity would also address all three cited economic development needs: expanded tax base, building confidence in Greenbelt, and building on its ability to handle and attract investment.

In considering these options HCDC is advising the City of Greenbelt to stop waiting for and reacting to the private sector's approaches and begin both leading and aiding or partnering with the private sector in achieving mutually shared economic development and planning goals. With so much invested already in the outcomes of any future development, putting some skin in the game to support desired infrastructure and amenities in order to have a better chance to guide development upfront; and foster desired outcomes may flip the script that has been

written over many years in how investment and development happen or don't happen in Greenbelt.

Greenbelt has both the staff capacity and has dedicated budgetary resources to set these recommendations in motion. Small Business Outreach adds a very modest level of programming into the future municipal services mix and is an excellent way to build community and engagement within a long untapped segment of Greenbelt.

How Does it Work?

Small Business Outreach

After determining whose direct oversight this nascent program becomes, this task could partially be accomplished by a pair of qualified, paid, part-time interns conducting municipal business outreach as a new communications function. This would be somewhat as envisioned in the Matrix *Final Report*.

Both outreach and message should be implemented in conjunction with the Public Information and Communications Coordinator's oversight. Initial functions include promoting the Business Toolkit communitywide, building up the business/ municipal relationship, assisting in the development of a local B-2-B network and determining the demand or need for other small business support programs, such as expert-subject seminars. The ongoing Business Breakfast initiative, commenced by Greenbelt in 2015, could be folded into the broader Business Outreach effort.

Development Facilitation

The City of Greenbelt, with its highly engaged and competent Planning Staff, and its dedicated and passionate Planning Advisory Committee members, is uniquely qualified to commence, instantiate, and solicit a historically site-sensitive, appropriately-scaled in-fill project to address its economic and community needs. Through the careful drafting and issuance of a Request for Qualifications for a development team, as a prelude to an invitation to participate in an ensuing, equally carefully-drafted Request for Proposals for the most qualified and compatible teams to submit for, the stage could be set for a welcomed, ground-breaking project that harnesses private sector capital and creativity to build a project under a thoughtfully-derived, locally-legitimized set of project parameters.

The City itself could recruit a willing, qualified development team or teams that understood expectations upfront. Then facilitate the development of a needed new housing or mixed-use type, influenced by community input from the start. Controlling the site selection, the development and architectural standards, and the very planning process itself to ensure a viable, site compatible proposal is ultimately selected for construction. The establishment of a

collaborative, non-confrontational development model for the City of Greenbelt is also an important market signal to send.

Public/Private Partnership

As with the prior development facilitation recommendation, this singular instance of what could and should ultimately become a programmatically-based approach to development (and economic development) for the City of Greenbelt is being offered for its timeliness, due to extant market conditions and pending competitive pressures, as well due to the presence of the Sage *Strategy* recommendation to “**reconsider redevelopment plans at Beltway Plaza.**” Please note that HCDC is not suggesting Greenbelt Staff or Mayor and Council reconsider prior proposals.

We are proposing a much more radical approach. Greenbelt Council has articulated that it wishes to see a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the Shopping Center and is reluctant to approve project segments piecemeal. The City of Greenbelt has twice responded to development proposals brought forward by the center’s owners, but have foregone providing support for those proposals without the proposals meeting contingent conditions that the owners were not willing to address. Whether it was perceived economic infeasibility or a lack of market viability due to the conditions proffered: the project did not proceed, and it is almost immaterial at this point. All that is past. However, the center remains an underperforming, only partially-developed resource; a question mark for both its management and the City. Residents and stakeholders interviewed for this, and many other reports and plans, have expressed a variety of dissatisfactory views over the center’s configuration and the experience it offers.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote: “The best propaganda is not pamphleteering, but for each one of us to try to live the life we would have the world live⁵.”

A phased and partial redevelopment of the center may be the only means of revitalizing it that the management has at its disposal. A partial redevelopment does not preclude a comprehensive plan from being a starting point for designing an initial project phase, and there could be many advantages to that approach. Nor does the existence of a comprehensive plan preclude the continued development or redevelopment of the center in phases, as is feasible. Nor should a comprehensive plan be a confining constraint for future investment that is to be responsive to changing market conditions.

We are recommending that the City determine what its most compelling interests are for the future redevelopment of the site, then approach the management at Beltway Plaza and see how, together, the City can support and induce the creation of the comprehensive plan that it wants to see from the management. The parties should jointly explore how the City can use

⁵ *Experiments With Truth: Essential Writings By And About Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 106

certain tools that it has at its disposal - tax increment financing (TIFs), Special Taxing Districts (STDs), Revenue Bonds and a multitude of potential infrastructure and revitalization grants - to enable the creation of better connectivity and pedestrian accessibility improvements to support phased redevelopment of the center in a way that includes and makes feasible the critical infrastructure planning necessary to achieve what all parties want to see from the redevelopment of the site.

Since Beltway Plaza is such a highly visible commercial resident of the City, and one of the more engaged and dedicated corporate citizens in Greenbelt; progress with revitalization at this location will have very symbolic importance for future economic activity with other external stakeholders. There is no guarantee that a successful conclusion will follow an attempt to create a public/private partnership in this circumstance, but who better to strive to plan and to build the community; offering and using its best planning aspirations, intentions, and resources, than Greenbelt itself.