

Guiding principles of Economic Development in Carrboro

A. Vision 2020

3.1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

With the population of Carrboro expected to increase during the Vision2020 period, additional commercial development should be anticipated both downtown and in peripheral areas. Carrboro should seek to reduce the tax burden on single-family owners by increasing the percentage of commercial space in town.

3.2 Nature of Development

In the interest of environmental preservation, new commercial development must minimize negative environmental impact, it must emphasize appropriate buffers, and it must not compromise the integrity of established neighborhoods.

3.3 Downtown Vitality

Downtown Carrboro should be nurtured as the social, cultural and economic center of our community. The downtown should include public social spaces as well as a mix of business types.

3.21 The town should develop a plan to govern the continuing development of downtown. Toward this end, the town should adopt the following goals:

- To double commercial square footage in the downtown from that existing in the year 2000.
- To accommodate additional square footage by building up, not out.
- To increase the density of commercial property in the downtown area.
- To improve the downtown infrastructure (e.g. parking facilities, sidewalks, lighting, shading) to meet the needs of the community.
- To develop transit and traffic initiatives which enhance the viability of downtown.

3.22 Carrboro should encourage the development and placement of architecturally significant commercial and civic buildings.

3.23 Other downtown commercial activity could include restaurants, entertainment venues, technology companies, lodging, and offices.

3.24 Frequent, accessible public transit is necessary for a thriving downtown.

Multi-modal access to downtown should be provided. As traffic increases, Carrboro should consider perimeter parking lots served by shuttles to bring people downtown.

- 3.25 Walkability should be encouraged downtown and pedestrian safety and comfort should be a goal. The town should improve lighting and shading, and create auto barriers.
- 3.26 Carrboro should continue to use the revolving loan fund to support the development of locally owned and operated businesses and encourage micro- enterprises through education and loans.
- 3.27 Carrboro should consider pedestrian-only spaces downtown.
- 3.28 Carrboro encourages a variety of appropriate residential developments – single-family, multi-family, SROs, et cetera – in the downtown especially as part of mixed-use developments.

3.4 New Commercial Growth

Opportunities for new commercial growth exist primarily in four areas: downtown, across from the Carrboro Plaza Shopping Center, within the commercial core of a village mixed- use development, and within new office/assembly conditional use developments. The latter two options are most obviously appropriate in the transition areas, but may be approved throughout the town's jurisdiction.

3.31 Shopping Centers

- 3.311 Before creating new shopping centers, the town should encourage those that exist to maximize their potential by adding stories when and where practical.
- 3.312 All shopping centers should be connected to residential areas with increased pedestrian access.

3.5 Technology

- 3.41 The town should research ways to support telecommuting.
- 3.42 Carrboro should continue to explore new technologies and should actively recruit private companies to supply Carrboro with the most up-to-date technology available, encouraging its distribution throughout the town.
- 3.43 Carrboro should help local businesses grow and expand by taking full advantage of the Internet and other new technologies that become available.

3.6 Home Businesses

Carrboro should encourage small, low-impact home businesses. The town should revise ordinances to remove any unnecessary obstacles to appropriate home businesses, and should encourage developers to accommodate home businesses in all new developments.

3.7 Economic Diversity

- 3.61 While our citizens may not be able to meet all of their consumer needs in Carrboro, it is important that the town encourage the widest possible diversity of locally operated businesses. The objective is a balanced portrait of convenience: a movie theater, overnight accommodations, home businesses, technology, retail, a variety or department store, restaurants and entertainment.
- 3.62 Carrboro is a town rich in economic diversity. The town should strive to continue this tradition by adopting ordinances and policies that recognize diverse employment types and pay scales.
- 3.63 The town should encourage the development of underutilized property in the downtown

B. Creating Carrboro's Economic Future

1. Economic development in Carrboro should:
 - a. ease the tax burden on residents by encouraging more and different types of commercial projects;
 - b. respect the environment;
 - c. promote downtown as a high-density, vibrant, and walkable urban core with a unique character;
 - d. support an atmosphere that allows creative people and enterprises to prosper;
 - e. recognize that Carrboro has the opportunity to encourage a wider range of commercial projects outside of downtown;
 - f. create jobs that pay at least a living wage with benefits; and
 - g. provide citizens with more local choices for goods, services, and workplaces
2. Key Recommendations –
 - a. Improve the Development Process and Land Use Ordinances to Support Economic Development
 - b. Branding Carrboro
 - c. Target “Best Bets” and Market the Town’s Assets
 1. UNC-CH spin-offs and associations
 2. National and state non-profits and associations
 3. Professional, technical and education services companies
 4. Creative companies
 5. Green oriented companies
 6. Entrepreneurial start-ups from UNC-CH and Duke (what the?) :)

7. Retail – with an emphasis on high quality experiences
8. Hwy 54/Jones Ferry Road
9. Northern Transition Area
- d. Enhance Carrboro's Assets
 1. Creative Carrboro
 2. Enhancing Downtown

C. Local Living Economy Task Force Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: Think Local First Campaign

The best way to influence buying habits that foster a sustainable, locally-owned, locally-sourced and -run economy is to educate the community via a Think Local First campaign.

We recommend a long-term initiative with multiple components designed to help citizens understand the importance of buying local and to showcase how easy it is to do. Elements of the campaign include:

- Creating a Think Local First brand
- Identifying and promoting local businesses through advertising
- Promotions and industry campaigns (i.e., natural health, automotive, trades)
- Community events including forums, yard sales and co-branding with other organizations

Every attempt was made to create events and initiatives that are inclusive and are of value to the many local business sectors and demographic subsets of the Carrboro community. In many cases, there are opportunities for volunteer involvement in the planning and execution of items. These recommendations are based on concepts included in *Small-Mart Revolution* but were developed with an eye to leveraging Carrboro's unique character. Most items meet several objectives that have been established to improve local buying. The success of each component and the overall campaign will be measured using a combination of owner-reported business metrics and participation data.

The members of the Local Living Economy Task Force respectfully ask the Board of Aldermen to look closely at this project and investigate items that could be led by the Town, enabling it to walk its talk on the local economy. We also ask members help in continuing the dialog by reaching out to community and business groups to encourage them to participate in or take responsibility for a component of the campaign.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Town to Consider Local Options for Banking, Investment, and Procurement

A vibrant and sustainable local living economy requires exploration and support of more locally-based banking options for the Town's services and investments *and* to serve our residents and businesses.

Local banking options are key to:

- Keeping capital local
- Enabling more locally focused lending

Town exploration and support of locally-based banking services and increased procurement of local goods and services aligns political will with public need. Large institutions such as the Town have a significant impact on local banks and businesses. Directing Town banking and purchasing activities to them will make them more sustainable.

We recommend that the Town investigate:

- Options for local banking investment, including the possibility of becoming an institutional member of and depositing some town money with Latino Community Credit Union, which will open a new branch at Carrboro Plaza later this year.
- Support locally focused lending by charging the Economic Sustainability Commission to develop a methodology to follow and measure local lending (for shelter, transportation, college and business) by our locally-owned banking institutions
- Expand local procurement of goods and services by identifying needs and prioritizing local sources for procurement

Local focus can be measured by volume of local lending to residents and businesses and other behavioral measures.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Town Maintenance and Promotion of the Revolving Loan Fund

A sustainable, thriving local living economy requires partnership between the town, local business, and local investors. Small business (the creator of more than 50 percent of jobs in the United States) is in a credit crunch with low loan availability and high cost.

The Carrboro Revolving Loan Fund is the Town's most effective current method of stimulating the creation and development of locally-owned businesses. Continuous improvement of the loan process and an expanded scope and volume of loans are measurable means of Town support.

We recommend that the Town direct the Economic Sustainability Commission and the Economic and Community Development Office to:

- Conduct a full review of the CRLF qualification process and loan portfolio, including:
- Measures of success

- Identification and prioritization of new types of business compatible with local living economy that could be targeted through CRLF
- Integration of business needs survey results
- Pursue stimulus funds for expansion of this program.
- Investigate the creation of a private investment fund for local business creation and development.
- Expand existing local business surveys to assess current needs (capital, land, space) for expansion and success.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Town Pursuit of Stimulus Funds

Federal and State stimulus funds are available to municipalities to aid in the creation, development, and support of small local businesses. Those municipalities who choose to apply for these funds will be taking a proactive step in supporting their respective local living economy.

Given the poor state of the U.S. economy and record level unemployment, the Federal Government instituted the \$862 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to stimulate the economy by increasing federal spending and cutting taxes. Approximately \$ 6.1 billion of this funding has been made available to North Carolina—35 percent of which is tax cuts. Funds awarded through contracts and grants are meant to shore up the North Carolina economy and provide jobs. A breakdown of the State's stimulus funds can be found here: www.ncrecover.gov/investments/default.aspx.

We recommend that the Town begin by investigating the following funding opportunities:

- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG's): \$6.9M available
- Transportation/Infrastructure Improvements: \$70M available
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation: \$37M available
- Weatherization: \$131M available

In addition, the Town should make a concerted effort to publicize the services and resources offered by the following local business support organizations:

- The Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC)
- Orange County JobLink Career Center
- Durham Tech's Small Business Center
- SCORE Chapel Hill Carrboro
- Council for Entrepreneurial Development (CED)
- Carrboro Revolving Loan Fund (CRLF)
- Orange County Small Business Loan Program
- Midway Business Center
- \$30 billion in federal Stimulus funds being redirected to community banks for small business loans

RECOMMENDATION 5: Town Branding and Marketing

Effective branding influences consumer behavior. Everything else being equal, consumers will regularly gravitate to or embrace a brand which has come to embody the traits or characteristics they value most.

The consistent use and promotion of a Town graphic and tagline provides a visual hook to uniquely identify those businesses, programs, events, products, people and the physical environment that define our community. Properly developed, this graphic and tagline could embody the unique traits and characteristics of the community (i.e. quality, successful, unique, healthy, committed, beautiful, funky, leading edge, fun, historic, active.)

Brands can convey positive or negative feelings. A successful town brand is one which reflects the best attributes of a community. When a successful brand is applied to a new and unproven business, product, or event the goal is for the positive attributes of the brand to be passed on so potential consumers choose to engage, try, or participate.

We recommend that the Board contract with a professional advertising firm to develop a Town graphic and tagline and to advise on how it might best be used.

See reference: Appendix A:

POLICYMAKERS: Branding and Marketing Effort ATTACHMENT B-11

RECOMMENDATION 6: Support of Local Economy Business Network

Local business networks play a leading role in building and sustaining a local living economy. The Town should leverage these networks in all its initiatives as it seeks to strengthen and grow the local business economy.

It is imperative that local businesses take a leadership role in the development of a local living economy. Without their intimate involvement up front, initiatives undertaken by concerned citizens or local government often fail when not embraced by the business community.

An engaged, local economy business network is best able to take the pulse of the business community. It will likely have the most current information available, and is therefore able to accurately give voice to businesses needs while simultaneously addressing those needs in partnership with Town advocates, local government and the community at large.

The Town has a wealth of resources at its disposal to aid local business networks in their efforts to grow the local living economy.

See reference: Appendix A:

Support Local Economy Business Network ATTACHMENT B-12