

Chapter 9

Economic Development

Goal

To embrace a stable, prosperous business environment focused on industry diversity, yielding family income sufficient to support education, recreation, social and cultural opportunities, comprehensive health services, affordable housing and public safety while preserving the environment and its natural beauty.

Policies

1. The City shall encourage actions and activities that promote the availability of new employment in the community, especially family wage jobs.
2. The City shall support efforts to obtain technical and employability skills needed by existing and prospective employers.
3. The City shall work with appropriate parties to increase tourism revenues.
4. The City shall work to improve networks of all kinds within the county, the region, and the state in support of economic and business development.
5. The City shall develop incentive programs to assist businesses with expansion, relocation and/or upgrading of existing storefronts and landscaping.

Recommendations

1. The City should complete the City's website for use, among other purposes, to promote business and economic development opportunities in the Florence area.
2. The City should continue to implement the Florence Downtown Implementation Plan in order to preserve and enhance the Downtown area.
3. The City should continue to support anchor tourism destinations such as our local golf resorts, Old Town, water-related recreational opportunities, and expanded shopping opportunities.
4. The City should continue to develop and improve recreational facilities and sites for tourists to draw more visitors to the town. Such activities may include Siuslaw Estuary Water Trail kayak launches, viewing platforms for bird watchers, trail signage, Frisbee golf, in-city open space areas (such as 3 Mile Prairie), and a family recreational development in the Old Town area.

5. The City should develop and implement an effective marketing strategy for the Pacific View Business Park.
6. The City should continue to support the mission of the Port of Siuslaw to create quality jobs and businesses through the development of Port facilities.
7. The City should work with the FAA to continue to improve the airport to enhance utility for general and commercial uses.
8. The City should encourage and support the Port of Siuslaw in nurturing water-related tourism and recreation, fishing of all kinds including aquaculture, and water-dependent commercial and industrial activities, and to diversify into light industry and manufacturing, high technology related businesses and other non-water-dependent activities.
9. The City should continue to work to improve vehicular access connecting Florence to other communities, particularly on Highway 126.
10. The City should continue to work to improve telephone and telecommunication services to the community, utilizing the most current technologies available.
11. The City should support increased opportunities for continuing education and specific workforce training in Florence.

Background

As we begin the new millennium, the City of Florence is poised to begin a period of well-planned, coordinated economic growth which will provide adequate opportunities for a variety of economic activities vital to the health, welfare and prosperity of the people of Florence and its surrounding area. Florence serves as a shopping, service and employment center for residents of Florence, the areas within the UGB, and residents of western Lane County, as well as its neighboring communities along the coast. Florence also attracts a large number of visitors to the area, some of whom eventually return to become residents and, sometimes local business owners as well.

In spring 1995, the Greater Florence Area Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Committee and the City of Florence jointly initiated a community based strategic planning process for community economic development. The Siuslaw Healthy Communities Alliance joined the effort in 1996. The strategic planning process was facilitated by Rural Development Initiatives, Inc. (RDI) and was funded by the City of Florence and grants from the Oregon Economic Development Department and the Department of Land Conservation and Development, and by the US Forest Service.

The planning effort included an assessment of the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). ECO Northwest provided statistical data in its report, "Forecasts for Employment, Population and Housing for the City of Florence." A Citizen Draft Review Vision Statement was prepared with broad citizen involvement, and mailed to all Florence households for review and comment.

In late 1996 and early 1997, RDI facilitated two public forums on transportation and property development, as well as eight public meetings to identify goals, strategies, and action plans to implement the vision which had been prepared earlier. The final draft identified five value statements or themes, which dealt with Basic Services, Economic Opportunities, Diversified Development, Local Character and Attractions, and Future Orientation.

The draft was presented to the City Council, and was “endorsed” on May 18, 1998, but not officially adopted due to conflicts over some of the policies and goals. The draft was adopted by the City Council in June 2000. Many of the goals have been, or are being realized through the City’s continuing efforts in economic development. **The Greater Florence Area, Strategic Plan for Community Economic Development, March 1998** is included in Appendix 9 of this Plan.

Included below are the Community Vision Statements from that document.

Basic Services

We value a community where people have access to what they need in order to lead productive and satisfying lives in our community. We recognize that health care, housing, clean water and other basic needs should be available to everyone and that they are essential to the overall health of the community.

Economic Opportunities

We value economic independence and the employment (including family wage jobs) that will help people achieve it. We want our young adults to see economic opportunities in Florence that will allow them to stay in the community or return after college and earn a living if they choose to do so. We value year-round stability and sustainability in our economy.

Diversified Development

Different types and levels of development are appropriate in different geographic segments of the community. Development should be dispersed throughout the area, rather than focused in one part of town, in order to avoid traffic congestion and economic imbalance. We value convenience of getting quickly and easily from place to place. We want people of all ages to have reasonable transportation alternatives. Quality of life should be available throughout the community.

Local Character and Attractions

We value safety, familiarity, friendliness and a supportive environment for children. Neighborliness is important to us. We want to maintain close, positive social relationships and a unique identity as we grow in population. We also value significant natural and built features of our community’s physical environment. Our historic bridge, dunes, forests, river and magnificent views, along with Old Town, the Events Center, and developing recreational and shopping attractions help draw visitors to our area. We want to maintain environmental quality and the coastal character of our town, while providing a mix of attractions that increase economic stability.

Future Orientation

We realize that nothing stays the same forever, and acknowledge that growth and change are signs of health. We value positive changes to our community which bring about an improved quality of life for our citizens. Promoting a successful future for the Florence area is among our most important responsibilities.

Many facets of these vision statements are being implemented by actions of the City and its citizens and committees.

The City, as part of its Periodic Review process, has prepared an inventory and analysis of commercial and industrial lands (Issue Paper # 1, Appendix 2). This paper concluded that the amount of commercial and industrial zoned lands is adequate for the 20-year planning period. However, as work continued on the Comprehensive Plan over a period of six years, it became clear that there is a need for zoning of land, specifically for land-extensive existing industrial uses, that may need to relocate over the next 20 years as newly designated uses take their place.

One option is the designation of additional lands along Highway 101 north of Munsel Lake Road as Service Industrial in order to provide lands for construction companies, and for businesses involved in sand and gravel, aggregate, building materials and other similar development related businesses. This designation is not intended for general retail commercial use. These lands are currently in the UGB outside City limits. Annexation would be required before those lands could be rezoned from the present County zoning districts. Access points to Highway 101 would need to be combined in order to meet ODOT access guidelines. After Oak and Spruce Streets are developed to the east, and west, respectively, of this area, then access would be directed to those streets, with access to Highway 101 at a signalized intersection. Direct access to Highway 101 would be limited to right-in, right-out only, from the prior combined driveways.

The City has also been active in preparing plans for economic activities in other areas of the City. In 1999, after many public meetings, the City amended the 1988 Comprehensive Plan to include the West 9th Street Area Plan and adopted the implementing zone, the Professional Office/Institutional Zone. Goals, policies, recommendations and background materials are included in Chapter 2 - Land Use.

In 1998, the City received TGM funds for preparation of a plan for the Downtown Area. Consultants were hired, a Downtown Steering Committee was formed, many meetings and forums were held, and a final draft plan was presented to the Planning Commission and the City Council in June 1999. Revisions were suggested and made, resulting in adoption of the Florence Downtown Implementation Plan in September 1999. This Plan covers the area of the City south of Highway 126 and east of Kingwood. Goals, policies, recommendations and background materials are included in Chapter 2 - Land Use and in Appendix 2. Since the adoption of the Plan, additional TGM funds have allowed preparation of preliminary engineering plans for the Downtown Green and Highway 101 Pilot Blocks (2001). An application for National Scenic Byway funds has been submitted for the Siuslaw River Bridge Interpretive Waysides.

In 1996, the City received funds for construction of an industrial park in another area of Kingwood, north of the downtown area, and adjacent to the airport. Construction of the park is complete. Improvements include streets, curbs, sidewalks, street lights, water, sewer and storm drainage. An industrial subdivision has been approved and recorded resulting in 54 serviced lots

available for business park and light industrial development. This subdivision has recently been renamed Pacific View Business Park. Immediately adjacent to the Pacific View Business Park is 40 acres of land belonging to the Port of Siuslaw which is zoned Pacific View Business Park District, and which is accessed and serviced via Pacific View Drive. In 1999, the City appointed an Economic Development and Marketing Committee, which includes representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Port of Siuslaw, and Lane Community College. That committee has prepared a strategic plan for marketing the community, which includes:

- preparation of a marketing packet which can be used by all participating agencies,
- designation of Pacific View Business Park, the adjacent 40-acre Port parcel, and Port lands on the waterfront, as an Enterprise Zone,
- provision of improved telephone and fiber optic service,
- a concerted effort to maintain and grow existing businesses.

The marketing packet is completed. The City has voted to apply to become the Florence Enterprise Zone and that application has been approved by the state. The City has joined the Fiber South Consortium, which is working to provide improved fiber optics for the region. Revisions have been made to industrial zoning in the Pacific View area to better differentiate the areas for different uses. The City, the Chamber, LCC and local banks are working together to retain and expand local businesses. The City has also established a small revolving loan fund to aid in business retention and expansion. Goals, policies, recommendations and background materials are included in Chapter 2, Land Use.

A commercial cluster of lands has been designated on Highway 101 in the area of Munsel Lake Road. Identified as the North Commercial Node, this area is appropriate for larger retail uses, and associated uses such as restaurants, hotels, motels, service businesses, and possibly service stations. Goals, policies, recommendations and background materials are included in Chapter 2 - Land Use.

Historically, the Siuslaw River and the Port facilities were the base for economic growth and development in the early years of the City. At the present time, the Port of Siuslaw provides moorage, launching, storage and other services for commercial and recreational fishing boats. The Port and the related Old Town Waterfront District draw tourist and waterfront business to the City.

The maintenance and improvement of the river channel and the jetties are essential to the continued health and future growth of the Port, and of water-related and water-dependent activities. The Siuslaw Estuary is classified as a “shallow draft development estuary.” A portion of the Siuslaw River is a “federally designated waterway.” The channel requires periodic dredging to maintain a navigable channel and a turnaround basin at Florence. The rough bar conditions at the mouth of the river have been a detriment to the Port and have led to the loss of commercial fishing to other ports over the years. Small ports are struggling to survive because of the cost of maintenance dredging and other economic pressures. For the period 1990 - 1994, the average cost for dredging the Siuslaw channel was \$502,000. The cost of the 2001 channel dredging was approximately \$822,000. The Corp of Engineers, who have traditionally provided maintenance dredging at ports, is under pressure to recoup the cost of dredging and to consider cost effectiveness of their dredging activities. Smaller ports, with less activity than the larger commercial

ports, are at a severe disadvantage when competing for scarce dredging funds. The City has supported past dredging efforts, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, due to the importance of the Port and waterfront to the economy of the community.

Goals, policies, and recommendations regarding the provision of an infrastructure sufficient to serve planned growth and development are included in Chapter 11 - Public Utilities and Facilities.

Relevant goals, policies and recommendations regarding Oregon Statewide Planning Goal 5 resources are included in Chapter 5 - Natural Resources.

In summary, for a community of its size, the City of Florence has initiated an ambitious, well-planned and coordinated series of plans to guide commercial and industrial development in the community throughout the planning period.