



---

*Rio Dell City Hall  
675 Wildwood Avenue  
Rio Dell, CA 95562  
(707) 764-3532  
cityofriodell.ca.gov*

June 3, 2025

TO: Rio Dell City Council

FROM: Kyle Knopp, City Manager

SUBJECT: Appointment of an Ad Hoc Committee Related to Economic Development

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL:

Appoint two members of the City Council to the Ad Hoc.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The City Council last appointed an Economic Development Ad Hoc in December of 2020. That ad hoc ultimately led to the creation of current Economic Development Strategy. Based upon the conversation at the recent FY 25-26 priority setting session, it is recommended that the Council appoint a new Ad Hoc to work on an update of the current plan and implementation priorities. Work of the Ad Hoc will eventually return to the full council for the Council's consideration.

Attachments:

1. 2021 Economic Development Plan

///



## Economic Development Ad Hoc

# Goals and Actions to Achieve Economic Development 2021

### Goals

---

- Maximize the economic potential of this bedroom community.
- Create a more visually attractive community.
- Increase City revenues to maintain and enhance public services.
- Create a reason for outsiders to visit.
- Create a team with resources, empowered to accomplish goals.

Mission Statement:

*"We will be successful when business space vacancy rates decline, more outsiders visit and city revenues increase. We will become the town that businesses and individuals want to invest in."*

### Goal Directives

---

#### 1.) Reduce Downtown Vacancy Rates

**A.) Action:** Implement city funded Façade Improvement Program with grants/loans for façade renovation.

*The downtown would benefit from visual enhancements only possible through physical improvement to facilities. The City could match up to 50 percent of the cost of construction work and designs reviewed through the City's Design Review process.*

- B.) Action:** Develop “Phantom Gallery” concept for artists to rent unused available commercial space.

*Currently, there is a high vacancy rate in the downtown. The City could offer to pay a reduced rent and electrical utilities and the storefront could be utilized to display the work of artists during the time the facility is looking for a permanent occupant.*

- C.) Action:** Evaluate downtown walkability and beautification options and create specific Downtown Walkability Enhancement & Beautification Plan.

*A specific plan could be developed by interested persons to make physical improvements to the publicly owned downtown core, including sidewalk improvements, tree planting, lighting or other improvements.*

- D.) Action:** Evaluate off-street parking and develop a plan to create more parking for employees and visitors in anticipation of long-term growth.

*Off-Street parking is an important component of a thriving downtown. Visitors need access to safe and nearby parking. Businesses wishing to hold larger events need visitors who can easily access the downtown.*

- E.) Action:** Consider the purchase of 255 Wildwood Avenue for pollution remediation and redevelopment as available commercial space or Community Center.

*255 Wildwood is currently an eyesore but the space is full of potential. The City could purchase the property and use grants funds to remediate pollution and put the property back into use. A plaza with community center, space for the Community Resource Center and rentable commercial kitchen is one example of a higher and better use of the property. The site could easily become the focal point of the downtown, whether in private or public use.*

- F.) Action:** Research the future of Eagle Prairie Bridge – develop advocacy plan for its longevity.

*In 2018 CalTrans, without notice, closed the Eagle Prairie Bridge for a 6-month repainting job. The closure exposed the importance of the bridge to the downtown core and its economic health. However, CalTrans’ long-term commitment to the bridge is in doubt, as the agency has approached both the County and the City to transfer the structure.*

- G.) Action:** Develop and implement mural program to enhance visitor’s experience.

*Examples abound locally of successful mural programs that help to provide visual enhancements to otherwise bland or deteriorating building surfaces. This program would present an opportunity to better represent the downtown, both to locals and visitors with a proven concept.*

## **2.) Increase Number of Out-of-Town Visitors**

- A.) Action:** Develop event space that allows for celebrations or festivals that can attract regional patronage.

*The City currently lacks the infrastructure to assist interested groups and individuals from holding significant large-scale events. Examples of events include a farmers market, beer festival or similar event. Concepts include a plaza and community center and creating an easy setup for volunteers to obtain permits for and set up events in a safe dedicated space.*

- B.) Action:** Invest in additional highway billboard signage (1) Wastewater property on Metropolitan (2) look to the south for northbound traffic signage spaces.

*Highway signage for the City is minimal and depends on standard CalTrans signage that offers no identity or encouragement for someone to decide to pull off the freeway.*

- C.) Action:** Consider partnership to generally advertise and raise local awareness of services available in Rio Dell (gas, lunch, nursery, dispensaries etc.)

*The City could help finance advertisements in local publications informing the public of general services in Rio Dell. The effort would help build local awareness of existing services and result in higher utilization.*

- D.) Action:** Focus on the cleanliness of the main Wildwood and Davis view sheds.

*The City continues to invest in code enforcement and prioritization of the Wildwood Davis viewshed. Continuing and expanding this effort is important. Potential improvements could be regularized street sweeping and other efforts to enhance the visual experience and post-visit review of visitors.*

- E.) Action:** Establish a Rio Dell Farmer's Market.

*Rio Dell lacks a Farmers Market, or other regular venue for community members to sell agricultural products or other homemade goods. Such programs are common in other communities and this idea could translate well.*

- F.) Action:** Create a draw. "World's largest frying pan" or similar.

*Outsiders and other US101 travelers lack a compelling reason to simply visit the community. Services include gas, food, dispensaries and the Dollar General. However, aside from these specific services, there is no other draw to the community. It is common for freeway adjacent communities to have draws, whether that be Bigfoot, Burls or other similar type ideas.*

### **3.) Increase the Quality of Life**

- A.) Action:** Continue to invest in quality municipal services, including infrastructure.

*The City itself is a tool that can be used to enhance quality of life. The City was incorporated in 1965 In order to provide a higher level of law enforcement than was provided by the County. Many unincorporated areas of Humboldt County would like to be*

*incorporated in order to exercise greater local control, but new State law makes incorporation very difficult and cost prohibitive.*

- B.) **Action:** Survey new residents and homeowners along with the younger demographic residents about what would enhance the quality of life and livability in the community.

*What defines Quality of Life should be informed by residents, especially those who have recently chosen to call this community home and also younger residents. The City should specifically reach out to these populations to identify what they believe would make the community a better place to live.*

- C.) **Action:** Develop a plan for the City to have expanded service roles involving parks, recreation and other quality enhancements.

*Quality of Life is often linked to public space amenities in a community. Parks, Libraries, basketball courts and walking trails are all examples of public amenities that create an interest in living within a community, and continuing to do so.*

- D.) **Action:** Consider working with the School District to develop a plan for the District's schools to achieve and retain distinguished school recognition, identifying the needed improvements, a plan to achieve and resources to help implement a strategic plan.

*The quality of educational opportunities for children is an often overlooked ingredient in a community's viability for new residents and ultimately new businesses. Schools that receive special recognitions are often the pride of a community and reflect well on the community as a whole. Even undertaking the effort reflects well on the community.*

#### **4.) Provide Quality Data to Decision Makers, Staff, Investors and the Community**

- A.) **Action:** Implement Economic Development Metrics.

*The long-term success of an economic development plan hinges on measurable metrics that can help provide transparency as to the results of the overall program. Successes should be recognized and new efforts should be made to correct areas where the program falls short. One of the best ways to provide this information is through measurable metrics that help inform policymakers about the outcome of plans and the implementation process.*

- B.) **Action:** Conduct economic leakage study. Consider consultants who could assist developing data specific to lodging investors such as Hotel Occupancy and Capacity Analyses.

*An economic leakage study would help provide valuable third party data to stakeholders, policymakers and residents about potential economic opportunities within the community. Such a study would also help illuminate weaknesses where action plans can then be developed and implemented to mitigate those weaknesses. The overall goal should be to use the information from professional studies to help lower risk to those choosing to make investments in the community.*

- C.) **Action:** Conduct SWOT Analysis and develop strategies to address threats.

*SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This type of analysis is done not only by the public sector, but also by businesses and individuals looking to invest in a community. These analyses can be broad or specific but their purpose is to inform stakeholders and decision makers about the environment they wish to enter or stay in.*

## **5.) Capitalize on Strengths and Opportunities**

- A.) Action:** Explore partnering with the Cannabis Industry for continued cooperation and/or opportunities to leverage Project Trellis grant dollars for Rio Dell.

*Over the past several years the Cannabis Industry has made some of the largest private business investments in the community. Recent successes in economic development are tied to the legal cannabis industry, and Rio Dell is not alone in these developments. Over the next couple years, the County of Humboldt will be investing over \$5,000,000 in the cannabis industry through Project Trellis grants. This is a potential opportunity to pull down additional investment funds into the community.*

- B.) Action:** Invest in HRDBP infrastructure, including streets and highway interface.

*The Humboldt Rio Dell Business Park (HRDBP) presents unique challenges and also immense opportunity for the community to create industry wage level jobs and revenue in the city. When annexed into the city, HRDBP's public infrastructure became the responsibility of the city and future development and growth of the site will require investment by the city to keep the area a target for growth and investment.*

- C.) Action:** Develop plans for underutilized or vacant parcels with streamlined permitting for parcels with an economic component.

*Rio Dell still has significant undeveloped or under developed parcels within the city limits. These are potentially immense opportunities for housing and business growth. In the absence of a vision by property owners, the city should, where possible, begin visioning for these properties to be put towards higher and better uses.*

## **6.) Branding and Identity**

- A.) Action:** Develop "Selfie-Station" concept where travelling visitors can identify themselves as having visited the community or region via social media.

*In the era of social media, visual iconography takes on added importance. The Golden Gate Bridge, Carson Mansion and other visual symbols of a community or geographic area are common photo opportunities that help to social media users readily represent that they have visited a location. Rio Dell is gifted with a number of icons, including the Eagle Prairie Bridge and the majestic bluffs. Icons can be created, such as the gateway signage. Capitalizing on these icons is important as social media continues to grow in influence.*



**B.) Action:** Create a Rio Dell Economic Development webpage to promote ideas, encourage investment and provide transparency.

*A website specific to Economic Development could also help to serve as a platform to help develop branding and identity for the community.*

## **7.) Capacity Enhancement**

**A.) Action:** Develop a plan to implement the Economic Development actions and provide the financial resources to accomplish.

*This Economic Development Initial Plan will need resources to fully realize.*

**B.) Action:** Consider hiring a grant writer and/or economic development coordinator to move the plan forward.

**C.) Action:** Consider the formation of an Economic Development Committee with community partners to help oversee and assist with the implementation of the core actions.

**D.) Action:** Send a delegation to cities of similar size and composition to first-hand explore their successes and failures.

**E.) Action:** Send delegations to Economic Development Conferences and developer conventions.

**F.) Action:** Create an annual grant availability inventory.

## **Metrics**

---

### **Reduced Downtown Vacancy Rates**

#### **Measure Downtown Vacancy Rate**

**Action:** Develop updatable standard metric for vacancies on Wildwood Avenue. Consider extending the metric to all commercial spaces.

### **Increased Outside Visitation**

#### **Measure Traffic Activity**

**Action:** Look to CalTrans for existing data. Consider establishing regular traffic volume monitoring on Wildwood Avenue if data is insufficient.

#### **Cell Phone Data**

**Action:** Consider using data provided by GoHumCo as a method of monitoring visitation to Rio Dell.

### **Increased City Revenues**

#### **Enhanced Measurement of City Revenues**

**Action:** Partner with an analytics firm to look at sales tax and other city revenues more closely.

## Recent Success

---

- Street and Sidewalk Work
- Increased staffing in the Police Department
- Business investment related to Cannabis and Cannabis Taxes
- Infrastructure Grants
- Increased Code Enforcement and an improving self-image for the community.

## Immediate Action Plan (IAP)

---

1. Third Party Leakage Study – Develop relationship with Consultants and produce respected third party data to make informed decisions.
2. Façade Improvement Program – Develop and implement.
3. Open Space Facility / Dog Park – Pursue new and specific recreational assets for the City.
4. Pursue Todd Property – Explore the future of this undeveloped parcel.
5. Beatification/Walkability Committee – form a group of community members and councilmembers to develop and plan and specific projects towards beautification.
6. Dinsmore Plateau / HRDBP Development / Development Friendly / Signage / Develop Alternative Options for Developers Water Line – Continue to invest in the current largest economic driver in Rio Dell: The legal cannabis industry.