

Chapter 8: Economic Development

Promoting economic development in Rockaway Beach must be a collaborative effort including City government, the business community and residents. Communities that recognize and build on their unique qualities and circumstances combined with a tremendous amount of evenly distributed local will and local effort can and will move toward a well-defined outcome. Economic development should not only focus on attracting business and jobs to the community but also provide a quality of life that makes Rockaway Beach a desirable place to live, work and invest. An essential component of economic development is the availability of public infrastructure and services necessary to support business development. Another aspect of economic development is improving the quality of life for future and current residents of Rockaway Beach through the development of public amenities to attract and cultivate a more skilled, entrepreneurial and diverse workforce.

Economic development is a high priority in many comprehensive plans and simply means growth to many people. Economic development efforts are goal oriented strategies that focus on bringing money in from outside the community. Any businesses that bring money into the community from outside consumers form its economic base. The most typical example of economic base industry is manufacturing where goods are produced locally and exported abroad. Tourism and recreation activities are basic economic sectors and make up a large part of the local economy in Rockaway Beach. Revitalization of Beach Boulevard along the lakefront is a significant component of economic development in Rockaway Beach because of its concentration of tourism and recreation business.

Other chapters of the plan introduce objectives and strategies for public infrastructure and future land use designed to improve the quality of life in Rockaway Beach. Therefore, this section of the plan will focus primarily on downtown and lakefront revitalization. The City of Rockaway Beach is not unfamiliar with works project development, especially in the city park area along the lakefront; however, these have been limited in producing economic development in the community. Public works projects and tax incentives are local economic development strategies that can be very costly and may require grant assistance from government programs or other types of financing. Downtown revitalization has been the focus in community development for at least the past few decades in American cities. A common trait of successful strategies is that, however well-intentioned, municipal governments alone cannot restore vitality to depressed downtowns.

Downtown Revitalization

Downtown Revitalization requires a degree of cooperation that is difficult to pull off and is best achieved when a unique private/public process is used. In spite of many formidable obstacles, it is important to remember that every downtown has a unique set of strengths, no matter how depressed it might be. It is these strengths that must be built upon in developing the revitalization strategy. Such a strategy must include, among other things; the creation of walkable streets and sidewalks, structured parking, culture and entertainment, increased safety, cleanliness and marketing. Determining whether the intention for a long-term effort is present in the community requires the mining of the most important asset a downtown revitalization has; memory and the emotion it unleashes. Emotion is why we create great civic structures, such as city halls, performance halls, arenas, and museums. Emotion is the reason historic buildings are renovated, even though the cost of renovation is usually greater than tearing down and building a new building.

To create a sustainable future for Rockaway Beach, we need to recast the public image of our community and make people want to live here and invest here. What is the image Rockaway Beach projects to someone driving through the city, to someone looking for a community to call their home, for a business or current resident deciding whether to reinvest in their property? The city cannot continue to look tired and run down and expect reinvestment or new investment to happen. There is no one action or strategy that can be employed by government, residents, business owners or civic organizations that will create the livable community and quality of life we all envision.

Working to change our public image early in this planning process will better position Rockaway Beach to attract new residential and commercial investment and will help to build a sense of community pride and hope for the future. We need to create the perception that change is already happening. Strategic physical improvements that have an immediate and visible impact for residents, existing businesses and potential investors must be made. Improvements along the lakefront, the water system improvements underway, and rehabilitation of private properties in the downtown area are welcomed changes. However, these improvements do not hide the continuing problems of property maintenance issues that are readily apparent if you drive along the lakefront and into surrounding neighborhoods. Although civic organizations, individual property owners, and government have taken or are currently taking some actions, a unified private/public partnership is needed for successful revitalization.

Economic Development Objectives and Strategies

Objective 8.1:

Promote community identity by revitalizing the lakefront/downtown district.

Strategy 8.1.1:

Encourage and provide assistance in the development and maintenance of community improvement associations and districts to protect and improve the physical attractiveness of the community.

Strategy 8.1.2:

Create a streetscape plan for Beach Boulevard that capitalizes on the historic and cultural significance of Rockaway Beach and tourism economy in Taney County.

Strategy 8.1.3:

Promote the preservation and enhancement of significant natural features and cultural resources, which are important aspects of the city's environment and history.

Strategy 8.1.4:

Identify opportunities and areas to establish increased off street parking in the downtown/lakefront.

Strategy 8.1.5:

Identify and recruit commercial and retail anchors along the lake front.

Objective 8.2:

Improve the visual quality of the lakefront to enhance tourism and recreation use.

Strategy 8.2.1:

Develop around a historic landing theme that serves as a physical and visual gateway from the lake into the downtown.

Strategy 8.2.2:

Work with the Corps of Engineers to implement strategies to dredge and remove algae and noxious plants in Lake Taneycomo.

Strategy 8.2.3

Work with White River electric and develop financing methods to bury utility lines along the lakefront.

Strategy 8.2.4:

Incorporate signage standards to reduce the impact of signs upon visual pollution along Beach Boulevard.

Objective 8.3:

Seek to build on our resources and establish a vibrant community with top-notch quality of life amenities to recruit new business and innovative entrepreneurs.

Strategy 8.3.1:

Enhance/expand the community library to provide public access to computer resources and information on adult continuing education and workforce training opportunities.

Strategy 8.3.2:

Market the City as environmentally friendly and increase amenities for active lifestyles for all ages.

Strategy 8.3.3:

Create a wireless hotspot in the downtown and communicate a demand for high speed and broadband internet services to telecommunications service providers.

Strategy 8.3.4

Promote and support voluntary cleanup campaigns throughout the community and enforce nuisance abatement ordinances to create a highly maintained and cared for appearance in Rockaway Beach.

Objective 8.4:

Provide economic opportunities and promote tourism and family related activities and events in the city.

Strategy 8.4.1:

Create a positive image of change through marketing and development of a City of Rockaway Beach website.

Strategy 8.4.2:

Enhance and improve City Parks and property on the lakefront to increase capacity to host area wide festivals and events.

Strategy 8.4.3:

Capitalize on relationship with the City of Branson and area tourism agencies to coordinate and publicize attractions and events in Rockaway Beach.

Local Economic Development Resources

Community Improvement District (CID)

Sections 67.1401-67.1571 of the Missouri Revised Statutes, known as the Missouri Community Improvement Act set forth regulations for establishing a CID. According to the Missouri Department of Economic Development, the ability of Missouri's communities to establish CIDs for the purpose of improving their public use facilities for the enjoyment, convenience, safety and common good of all citizens is an outstanding example of local economic development excellence. Unlike a Neighborhood Improvement District, a CID is a separate legal entity, and is distinct and apart from the municipality that creates the district. A CID is, however, created by ordinance of the governing body of the municipality in which the CID is located, and may have other direct organizational or operational ties to the local government depending upon the charter of the CID.

By request a petition, signed by property owners owning at least 50% of the assessed value of the real property and more than 50% per capita of all owners of real property within the proposed CID is presented to the governing body of the local municipality in which the proposed CID would be located. Language contained in the petition narrative must include a five year plan, describing the purposes of the proposed district, the services it will provide, the improvements it will make and an estimate of the costs of the improvements. In addition, maximum rates of property taxes and special assessments that may be imposed within the proposed district must be established. Other information must state how the CID would organize an administrative body and whether the governing board would be elected or appointed. There are specific rules that provide the required elements of a CID petition. The procedures for publication, public hearings and other requirements are included in the statutes referenced above.

A CID may finance new facilities or improvements to existing facilities that are for the use of the public. Such public-use facilities include:

- Convention centers, arenas, meeting facilities, pedestrian or shopping malls and plazas

- Paintings, murals, fountains or kiosks
- Parks, lawns, gardens, trees or other landscapes
- Streetscapes, lighting, benches, marquees, awnings, canopies, trash receptacles, walls
- Lakes, dams and waterways
- Sidewalks, streets, alleyways, bridges, ramps, tunnels, traffic signs and signals utilities, drainage works, water, storm and sewer systems and other site improvements
- Parking lots, garages
- Child care facilities and any other useful, necessary or desired improvement

A CID may also provide a variety of public services, some of which may be:

- Operating or contracting for the operation of parking facilities, shuttle bus services
- Leasing space for sidewalk café tables and chairs
- Providing trash collection and disposal services
- With consent of the municipality, prohibiting, or restricting vehicular and pedestrian traffic and vendors on streets
- Within a designated "blighted area", contract with any private property owner to demolish, or rehabilitate any building or structure owned by such property owner
- Providing or contracting for security personnel, equipment or facilities

Funding of CID projects and services must be set forth in the requesting petition that is presented to the local governing body of the municipality in which the CID is located. Funding may be accomplished by district-wide special assessment, rents, fees, charges for the use of CID property or services, grants and gifts or donations. If the CID is organized as a political subdivision, property and sales taxes may also be imposed within the boundaries of the CID.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Sections 99.800-99.865 of the Missouri Revised Statutes set forth regulations regarding TIF redevelopment projects. TIF districts are a method to use expected future gains in tax revenues to subsidize capital improvements in areas where redevelopment would not occur otherwise. Anticipated additional taxes generated by a completed development in the future pay for development costs such as land acquisition and site improvements in the present. The difference between the taxes before the development occurs and after its completion is referred to as the "increment". Geographic eligibility is

statewide in areas designated for TIF funds. The project area must be in a blighted or conservation area or central business district. Property tax revenue is one of the sources of financing. Payments to the local taxing authorities are frozen at the pre-TIF or project level for 23 years. TIF Funds are derived from a bond issue leveraged by the tax increment.

Missouri Department of Economic Development

Missouri Community Assessment & Planning Process (MoCAPP)

MoCAPP is a technical assistance, assessment, and planning process, which allows for designation and recognition by the Department of Economic Development. The MoCAPP process is similar to the comprehensive planning process and includes; the creation of a community betterment association, a vision statement, asset mapping, goal setting and prioritization. Communities interested may participate in completing the necessary thresholds for recognition as a Star City, 5-Star City, or All-Missouri Certified City. The program assists in the identification of resources, both internal and external, that can be used to accomplish the goals set forth by the community. In addition, state and federal agencies can better identify and offer assistance to communities actively participating in MoCAPP.

Downtown Revitalization and Economic Assistance for Missouri (DREAM)

The DREAM Initiative is an innovative partnership between the Missouri Department of Economic Development, Missouri Development Finance Board and Missouri Housing Development Commission to provide communities across the state with access to technical and financial assistance for downtown revitalization. The goals of the DREAM Initiative are to revitalize targeted districts in small- to mid-sized Missouri communities. Ultimately, the program works to put back into use, or increase productive use, of:

- Land
- Buildings
- Neighborhoods
- Downtown areas

The program is managed through a partnership between the Missouri Development Finance Board, Missouri Department of Economic Development and the Missouri Housing Development Commission.

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)

The CDBG program offers grants to small Missouri communities to improve local facilities, address critical health and safety concerns, and develop a greater capacity for growth. Communities with populations fewer than 50,000 are eligible to apply for grants for projects in numerous funding categories including downtown revitalization. Projects must address the national objective of elimination of slums and blight, or the 51% low to moderate income (LMI) benefit.

USDA Rural Development

Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) Program

The RBEG program provides grants for rural projects that finance and facilitate development of small and emerging rural businesses. The program helps in funding distance learning networks and employment related adult education programs. To assist with business development, RBEGs may fund a broad array of activities. Examples of eligible fund use include; Acquisition or development of land, easements, or rights of way; construction, conversion, renovation, of buildings, plants, machinery, equipment, access streets and roads, parking areas, utilities; pollution control and abatement.

Community Facility Grants

Community Facility Grants assist in the development of essential community facilities in rural areas and towns with populations of up to 20,000. Grant funds can be used to construct, enlarge, or improve community facilities for health care, public safety, and community and public services.

The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT)

Transportation Enhancements Program

The Transportation Enhancement Program requires the state to use 10% of its surface transportation program annually for enhancement activities to ensure that transportation spending supports more than just roads. Enhancement funds are available for a variety of projects. These projects help create more travel choices by providing funding to construct sidewalks and bike lanes. Communities may also use enhancement funds to revitalize local economies by restoring historic buildings, renovating streetscapes or providing transportation museums and visitor centers.

Transportation Development Districts (TDDs)

TDDs are organized under the Missouri Transportation Corporation Act in sections 238.300-238.367 of the Missouri Revised Statutes. The district operates like other improvement districts that use special district tax assessments to fund district projects. The district may be created to fund, promote, plan, design, construct, improve and maintain transportation projects.

Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

This program is funded by the Department of the Interior's, National Park Service and administered through DNR. This is only for outdoor recreation projects, which must be approved at the state and federal level. Funds can be used to acquire land and develop facilities. Examples of eligible facilities include, but are not limited to, picnicking areas, sports and play fields, outdoor play courts, swimming, boating or fishing facilities, trails, winter sports facilities, outdoor ice rinks, natural areas, passive parks and amphitheaters. When an LWCF grant is accepted, the recreation facility's land must remain dedicated to public outdoor recreation use forever. The federal share for any project is limited to a 45% reimbursement of the total project cost.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program is a funding assistance program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Each state receives funds from the FHWA to administer its own program. In Missouri, the Department of Natural Resources is the state administering agency. Recreational Trails Program grants require a match from the sponsor and are payable on a reimbursement basis. The minimum allowable match of 20% can include in-kind contributions and donations. The grant is reimbursed to the project sponsor once the project is completed. Recreational Trails Program funds may be used for:

- Construction of new trails
- Acquisition of property or easements for trails (must comply with federal land acquisition laws)
- Preservation, renovation and/or restoration of existing trails
- Development, renovation and/or restoration of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages
- Purchase and lease of trail construction, renovation and/or restoration equipment
- Production and or presentation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection related to trails