

# Memo

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To: Mayor and City Council

From: Councilmember Steve Bridge

Subject: Possible Budget allocation approach — Creation of a Consolidated Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives Office

Date: May 14, 2025

CC: Dean Albro, Jeff Malaway

Colleagues,

As part of this year's budget cycle, I am requesting that we consider the consolidation of economic development, grant writing, project facilitation, and strategic outreach functions into a City-managed area responsible for economic development, grants, project facilitation and strategic outreach.

To support this concept, I have separately submitted a memorandum to the City Manager requesting an administrative evaluation of this proposed structure. That request is intended to assist staff in preparing materials for Council review and does not reflect or seek consensus from members of the Council in advance of a noticed public meeting.

## Context:

The City's current model disperses critical development and engagement responsibilities across:

- A contracted economic development service (Chamber of Commerce) with limited accountability
- Grant writing efforts that are not strategically aligned with broader City objectives
- A Public Affairs role focused primarily on digital communication without a strong connection to economic or image-building strategies
- A partial FTE coordinating with the Vandenberg Community Council (VCC), our region's primary platform for aerospace and federal partnership development
- The Lompoc Community Benefit Foundation (LCBF), a grant-partnering entity that remains underutilized and appears to have lost its certification.

In addition, project applicants — including small businesses, developers, and nonprofits — frequently struggle to navigate the City's permitting and review processes. While staff may identify compliance issues, applicants are often left without clear guidance on how to resolve them. This lack of proactive assistance causes delays, increases costs, and in some cases, leads to abandonment of projects that would otherwise benefit the community. The absence of a dedicated facilitation function is a structural gap that this program would address. I have added an attachment that highlights some past and present projects that have experienced this condition.

## Proposal:

Create a functional area of economic development and strategic initiatives that unifies and manages the following responsibilities:

- Project Facilitation and Applicant Support – Help businesses and developers navigate City procedures, resolve issues, and accelerate implementation
- Economic Development and Business Retention/Attraction – Previously outsourced, now align directly with City priorities
- Strategic Outreach via VCC – Integrate VCC-related engagement into a larger business development strategy connected to Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB) and local businesses
- Public Affairs and Communications – Refocused to promote Lompoc’s business and community image, enhance community engagement, and support development, attract funding efforts and promote business growth.
- Grant Writing and Management – Coordinate grant strategy with economic and infrastructure goals. This would work with the now defunct benefits corporation that was previously created.
- Revitalization of our BTC system and ensure that all existing businesses are identified and funding is allocated for business development
- Reactivate the Lompoc Community Benefit Foundation (LCBF) – Actively use this nonprofit vehicle for competitive grant applications and partnership leverage multiple funding and business sources

## Funding:

The funding for this effort would come from redirection of existing functions with partial funding coming from allocation of vacant positions and an increase in BTC . These sources include:

- Reallocation of funding from the Chamber contract. The chamber now is only open by appointment, has been focused on social measures such as passing the recent school bond measure and workforce development. While worthy goals, the city would be better served by focusing resources on recruiting new businesses to our community.
- Refocus 50% of Senior Administrative Analyst Position for focused business outreach
- Reallocate 50% of Community Relations / PIO to Business Development focus
- Place VCC funded efforts under this umbrella to create synergistic opportunities between city, businesses and VSF base.
- Allocate 2 Vacant Positions which can be matrixed back to existing organizations when not active on economic activities.
- Enforce the BTC program with 50% being allocated to business development activities targeted to business assistance. (Small business loans, startup assistance, development fee assistance, etc.)

## Potential Success Metrics:

Category	Proposed Metric
Project Facilitation	Reduction in average permit processing time
Business Development	Number of net new businesses opened or assisted
VSFB/VCC Engagement	Number of joint projects or grant awards involving VSFB
Public Engagement	Increase in traffic to economic development pages on City website
Grants & LCBF Utilization	Number of grant applications submitted with LCBF participation
BTC Program	% increase in registered businesses and revenue collected through BTC
Overall Efficiency & Coordination	Number of applicants receiving facilitation support (tracked quarterly)
Stakeholder Feedback	Business/developer satisfaction rating (survey or case follow-up)

**Note:** These metrics may be reviewed quarterly by Council to track accountability.

## Request:

That Council direct staff to:

- Prepare a feasibility and organizational analysis for the proposed office
- Identify staffing structure and reporting lines
- Provide budget implications, including potential reallocation of Chamber contract, enhanced BTC funds, and allocation of now vacant positions.
- Recommend a plan for integrating VCC coordination into ongoing business development work
- Provide details on BTC participation and any potential efforts to expand and collect funds
- Return with a timeline, phasing plan, and initial implementation steps.

This effort will help modernize and align the City's economic strategy with the opportunities emerging from Vandenberg, move projects from vision to reality quicker. enhance our ability to secure external funding and improve Lompoc's image and service delivery.

Sincerely,  
Steve Bridge  
Councilmember, City of Lompoc

**Past and Recent Examples of project that have experienced delays or cancelation of project:**

**Odd Fellows Window Repairs:** Misinterpretation of conditions of compliance caused a 2 year delay. By the time resolved funding had been reallocated to another city

**Solvang Brewery Expansion:** Delay to meet city walk lighting caused project to delay and petitioner canceled project

**D Street Warehouse Project:** 4 year delay and changes in requirements due to inspectors changing, created significant project expense growth

**Michaels:** Intransigence regarding alley access solutions cause project to be canceled and empty building on Ocean.

**Rudolph Building:** 12 months lost validating building could be considered historic, even though code only requires eligibility not registration.

**Lompoc Theater:** Over a year delay over miscommunications between city and architects.

**Las Flores Apartment Complex:** Ready to walk away due to comments back from planning. They do not seem to know how to engage in discussions.

**Cold Coast Brewer:** 3 months lost on vinyl sign approval.

**Indicot Cannabis:** 1 Year planning effort and then bankrupt

**Monty's PCH:** Unwilling to approve wine as retail, required a clothing rack inside to be able to open.

You probably all have your own stories.