

Improving the Town's Business Community

TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Town of San Anselmo
Economic Development Committee

April, 2018
(rev'd 6/18)



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1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Economic Development Plan is to provide specific Town actions to “Maintain and enhance the economic viability of the Town’s commercial area through actions that attract, retain and nurture local businesses” consistent with General Plan goals to preserve the small town community character, scale, and “pace of life...and the Town’s close connection with the natural beauty of its setting.”

The Town of San Anselmo, nestled at the base of Mt. Tam in Marin County, California, is home to about 13,000 residents. The Town’s resilient economy survived the Great Recession, periodic floods, and growing competition from regional and Internet retail.

However, Town residents and leaders continually strive to help the business community adapt to evolving economic conditions by attracting needed businesses, reducing vacancies, and improving the mix of businesses and services that address local as well as regional demand. The Plan seeks to maintain the Town’s community character while improving physical conditions.

This Economic Development Plan provides direction to residents, merchants and community leaders to improve San Anselmo’s economy and attract the types of businesses that will benefit the community. The document describes a range of actions that can help address business constraints and enhance the Town’s strengths through public services and programs, community marketing efforts, and physical improvements.

The Plan establishes a basis for the Town’s Economic Development Committee’s (EDC) annual economic objectives and actions. The EDC meets monthly to address issues and opportunities to improve the Town’s business environment.



¹ Excerpted from the Town of San Anselmo General Plan Land Use Element, Land Use Goals (pg. 7).

² Ibid.



1. INTRODUCTION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Town Council established an Economic Development Subcommittee in June 2006 to “explore economic opportunities for the Town.”³ The subcommittee kicked off a visioning process for the south end of San Anselmo Avenue, explored downtown beautification, became a forum for discussion among various business groups, and raised awareness of the San Anselmo community by supporting events.⁴ At that time, there were several business organizations and the committee included representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Red Hill Merchants Association, Greenfield Avenue merchants and downtown San Anselmo Avenue merchants and antique dealers. In 2012, the San Anselmo Town Council established the Economic Development Committee (EDC) as a formal committee. In 2015, the committee’s resolution defining its operational framework was revised as follows:⁵

Charge: The charge of the Economic Development Committee is to work with the Town’s business community to identify actions that can be taken to ensure that the business community is vibrant, successful and meets the needs of the Town residents.

Purpose: To ensure that the Town’s business community and the residential community has a forum for giving the Town input on steps needed to attract and retain a variety of small businesses.

Goals and Objectives: In accordance with the Town’s General Plan, and bearing in mind the obligation to maintain the integrity and heritage of the town, the Committee will develop and implement an Economic Development Action Plan consisting of agreed upon goals, objectives and action steps that will serve as the framework for the Committee’s ongoing progress. This plan will be reviewed and amended as needed and presented to the Town Council on an annual basis.

The Economic Development Plan documents the work of the EDC, including the Action Plan, and describes background information about the Town, economic development issues and opportunities, and specific objectives to achieve EDC goals. The Plan consolidates research, analysis and plans developed by the EDC as a resource for Town residents, current and potential future businesses. The EDC intends, as directed by the Town Council, to update the Plan as conditions change and progress is made towards EDC goals.

³ San Anselmo Town Council Minutes, June 13, 2006 (Item 10).

⁴ Town of San Anselmo Staff Report, October 3, 2012, for the October 9, 2012 Town Council meeting.

⁵ San Anselmo Town Council Resolution 4112 (2015)



1. INTRODUCTION

OTHER TOWN ORGANIZATIONS

While the focus of this Plan is on the goals and objectives of the San Anselmo Economic Development Committee, successful planning and implementation depends on the coordinated participation by other Town organizations, which include (but are not limited to):

- **Town Council** – The Town Council will review and may adopt this plan, or policies contained in this Plan, and integrate policies and actions in to the Town’s General Plan. Council approval is required for all expenditure of Town funds and adoption of plans and policies.



- **San Anselmo Chamber of Commerce** – As described on their website⁶, the Chamber and its business members strive to create a strong local economy by promoting the community and representing the interest of business to government. The Chamber sponsors various events in support of these objectives.



- **Town of San Anselmo Recreation Department** –

The Town Recreation Department organizes events in the San Anselmo Avenue business district several times a year. The Town holds a “Picnics on the Plaza” music series during the summer, September “Country Fair Day,” October Halloween event, and holiday tree lighting and Breakfast with Santa in December.

⁶ <http://sananselmochamber.org/>



2. OVERVIEW OF SAN ANSELMO

San Anselmo, sometimes referred to as the “Hub City”, sits near the center of Marin County at the juncture of major arterials leading from the Greater Bay Area and Marin County urban centers to West Marin’s bucolic agricultural and coastal communities. Figure 1 depicts the Town’s central location within the County, and its key position in the region.



Figure 1 Town of San Anselmo & Region

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Town of San Anselmo evolved over the past several centuries from a railroad hub and summer resort to become a friendly, small town at the center of Marin County. The San Anselmo Historical Museum website⁷ describes this evolution:

Since the days when the Coast Miwok Indians roamed the oak-studded hills and fished the fresh waters of San Anselmo Creek, the climate, the beauty and the serenity of San Anselmo have appealed to all who have passed this way.

The sights, sounds, and smells of San Anselmo were primarily pastoral until 1874 when the North Pacific Coast Railroad added to its line a spur track from San Anselmo to San Rafael. In 1875 the railroad completed a line from Sausalito to Tomales via San Anselmo. For a few years the town was referred to on railroad maps as Junction, but in the 1880s, taking its name from Cooper’s original

land grant, the name San Anselmo came into use. Railroad officials, anxious to see towns and passengers along its line, encouraged some feverish real estate activity, but it wasn’t until San Francisco Theological Seminary was built in 1892 that the town began to grow.

After the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906 many [of these] summer residents built permanent homes, planted trees along the hot dusty streets and began to think of incorporation. Lively debates ensued between those who would incorporate (and keep the town dry).

The next influx of growth came with the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937. Now, with a population of approximately 12,000, San Anselmo remains essentially a family town with a gentle pace and friendly ambiance.

⁷ <http://sananselmohistory.org/brief-history/>



2. OVERVIEW OF SAN ANSELMO

SAN ANSELMO TODAY

San Anselmo remains a small-town community, an alternative to those seeking refuge from San Francisco as in days past. Young and growing families move to San Anselmo looking for a less intense urban environment to raise children, access to high-quality schools, and proximity to recreation. While many residents continue to commute to high-paying jobs in the San Francisco financial center, Marin County businesses founded by entrepreneurial residents attracted by the region's amenities created thriving local industries in the areas of health care and biotech, tourism, music and film. George Lucas's Star Wars franchise flourished in Marin County, and generated numerous creative offshoots that continue to thrive. Other creative classes, including artists, musicians, writers, and scientists call Marin County home and contribute to the vitality of San Anselmo and its neighboring towns.

Access to San Francisco, the pastoral West Marin countryside and coastal communities, and nearby wine country, are just a few of the reasons why new Marin residents, once settled, have difficulty moving from the area while the influx of retirees continues. The area is blessed by a comfortable year-round climate, occasionally interrupted by storms and flooding.

The Town has few vacant lots available for development and is largely "built out." Commercially zoned lots are small and do not support large new commercial development or national retail chains. The Town has, and will continue to have, smaller scale commercial development. Commercial lots range from 1,000 square feet to 4.5 acres, with the average lot size approximately 15,000 square feet in the general commercial areas. In the historic Downtown area, the average lot size is around 5,500 square feet.

Downtown San Anselmo has managed to retain much of the historic character of its buildings, although many of the original facades have been modified over time. The Town's historic downtown has evolved from a railroad hub and older traditional town center into a vital retail center. However, challenges remain as convenient and plentiful parking is sometimes hard to find during peak periods and the area is subject to flooding. San Anselmo and other Ross Valley towns are wrestling with solutions to periodic floods that create significant damage, including damage to businesses in the Downtown. The Town is pursuing mitigation projects to reduce the flooding risk, and works with businesses to install and maintain flood control gates.



2. OVERVIEW OF SAN ANSELMO

LOCAL DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMY

San Anselmo's population of 12,900 has been relatively stable since the 1970's, as the area is largely built-out.⁸ Nearly 60 percent of the Town's 6,400 employed residents work in "management, business, science, and arts" occupations.⁹ The Town unemployment rate is low at 2.4%.¹⁰ The U.S. Census estimates the Town's median household income¹¹ at \$102,300 or about 10 percent higher than the Marin County median.¹² Average household incomes of \$137,200 reflect the influence of the 20 percent of households earning more than

\$200,000 annually, which pushes average incomes well-above the median. However, about one quarter of Town households earn less than \$50,000 per year.¹³

The Town population consists primarily of families with younger children and older adults. There are few young adult residents.

As shown in Table 1, San Anselmo's population tends to be older and highly educated, consistent with Marin

Table 1 - San Anselmo Demographic Characteristics

Total Population	12,599	100%
Under 18 years of age	2,919	23.2%
18 to 24 years	7,482	59.4%
65 years and older	2,198	17.4%
Total housing units	5,434	100%
Vacant housing units	219	4%
Owner occupied	4,005	73.3%
Renter occupied	1,240	22.7%
Household with Children under 18	3,462	66.0%
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's degree or higher	8,668	68.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In 2016, the mean single-family home price in San Anselmo was \$1,152,812 and the median price was \$1,051,000. Condominiums and townhomes

were less expensive, with a mean price of \$658,714 and median price of \$675,000.¹⁴

⁸ Cal. Dept. of Finance, January 2017.

⁹ American Factfinder,

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

¹⁰ California Employment Development Department preliminary unemployment data for San Anselmo, October 2017.

¹¹ "Median" means that half of households earn more, and half earn less than the median value. The average income is higher than the median because the average is biased by the effect of high incomes.

¹² U.S. Census, American Factfinder, 2011-15 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkml#

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Marin County Tax Assessor sales data for 2016, <https://www.marincounty.org/depts/ar/divisions/assessor/sales?disclaimer=true&year=2016&month=Annual&dt=all> (accessed December 6, 2017)



2. OVERVIEW OF SAN ANSELMO

TOWN ECONOMY

Sales tax accounts for less than 8% of the General Fund revenue in the 2017-2018 Town Budget. The Town receives a 1 percent rate of the 8.75 percent in sales tax on retail sales transactions taking place in San Anselmo.

The Town also benefits from an additional half-cent voter approved tax devoted to road maintenance and capital improvements.

HOUSEHOLD SPENDING

According to a Business Retention Study prepared for the Town, San Anselmo households spend approximately \$285 million annually throughout the region on all items.¹⁵ Of that total, about \$87 million of the \$285 million is spent outside of San Anselmo creating a “leakage” of potential expenditures. This “leakage” is partly compensated by expenditures of non-residents visiting the Town.

As noted in the Retention Study, several factors limit the Town’s ability to attract certain types of businesses. Examples of constraints include competition from internet retail and regional shopping centers, parking limitations, and distance from the 101 corridor.

VISITOR SPENDING

In addition to resident spending, San Anselmo captures spending by residents of surrounding communities, and visitors to the area. Estimates of non-resident spending in Town are not available; however, it is estimated that

as much as \$30 million¹⁶ of San Anselmo’s \$97.7 million¹⁷ of taxable sales to retail businesses, a subset of total sales and expenditures, are due to visitors from the region and beyond.

¹⁵ Town of San Anselmo Business Retention Study, performed by Marin Economic Forum, December 23, 2015; presented to the EDC meeting of January 5, 2016.

¹⁶ Estimate of visitor taxable spending assumes that about one-third of resident “leakage” of \$87 million, or about \$30 million, is compensated by visitors.

¹⁷ Taxable Transactions” from Research & Statistics Section, State Board of Equalization, 2013, Retail and Food Services, excluding All Other Outlets



2. OVERVIEW OF SAN ANSELMO

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES

The Town's General Plan broadly classifies a portion of the Town's commercial enterprises, particularly the retail businesses, as "residential support" and "destinations". Other types of commercial uses are more office-based, though may still be considered "residential support", for example real estate, financial services, and medical offices. San Anselmo's commercial districts are a mix of these uses.

The Town economy is also made up of many home-based businesses and self-employed residents working from home and in local cafes. Traditional manufacturing and industrial uses are almost nonexistent in San Anselmo, but small arts enterprises thrive in parts of Town, some with retail storefronts.

RETAIL

"Residential Support" uses include food and drug stores; automobile service shops and stations; personal service stores including barber shops, beauty shops, and dry cleaners; and retail outlets which depend on local residents as their primary clientele. Many types of businesses, for example restaurants, serve local residents and also function as "destinations" for visitors from other communities for continued financial viability.

Providing a "specialty" product and high degree of customer service enables many small businesses to succeed and compete effectively against national retailers and major internet retailers.

The antique and other furniture stores in San Anselmo, although their numbers have declined over time, are another example of specialty retail outlets that are "destinations" which draw dollars from outside the community into the Town, and are less dependent on local residents as their primary clientele.¹⁸ Many other businesses in Town have come to rely on a combination of resident and visitor spending, as well as internet sales and in many cases, multiple outlets in other communities for continued financial viability. Providing a "specialty" product and high degree of customer service enables many small businesses to succeed and compete effectively against national retailers and major internet retailers.

OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL USES

The Town does offer some space for small business and professional offices. These offices are occupied by businesses and professionals serving the

community or local professionals who desire office space close to home.

INDUSTRIAL

Industrial and manufacturing uses are almost nonexistent in San Anselmo, and the community does not offer the types or size of land parcels that

would attract these types of industry in the future. Former industrial buildings have been converted to other uses.

¹⁸Town of San Anselmo General Plan Land Use Element, Existing Land Use, pg. 6.



2. OVERVIEW OF SAN ANSELMO

COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

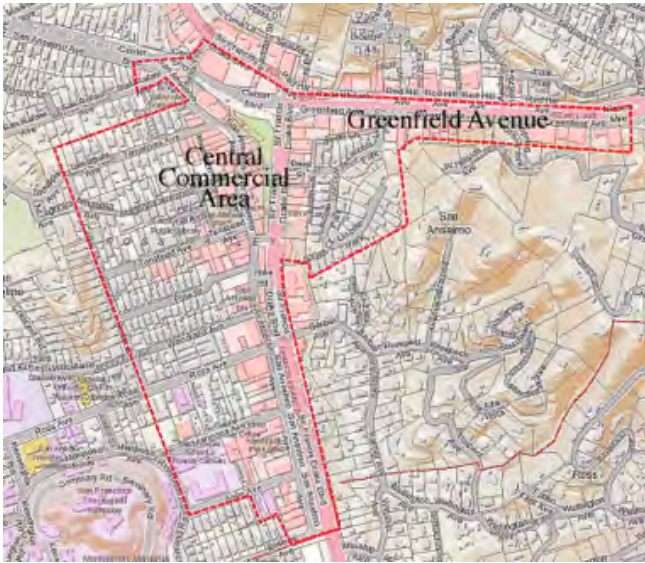


Figure 2 Commercial Districts

The Town's businesses serve the broader regional population and visitor base as well as local residents. The Town has a primary commercial area and three, small, neighborhood commercial districts. Figure 2 shows two of the areas. In the central commercial area, the community's historic downtown provides a diverse mix of locally-owned and operated retail shops, restaurants, services, and offices. The Red Hill community shopping center (not shown) serves the community with a national chain grocery store and drug store, and smaller restaurants, retail businesses and banks. The Greenfield district offers a variety of goods and services. Other retail and service businesses can be found outside of the commercial districts, and tend to follow the former tracks and stops of historic rail line routes.

SAN ANSELMO AVENUE/CENTRAL COMMERCIAL AREA

The Central Commercial area can be found along portions of San Anselmo Avenue and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard between the Hub and Tunstead Avenue. This commercial area is the Town's historic "main street" and traditional commercial center since the late 1800s. Many existing commercial buildings in the area date back to the early 1900s and 1920s. The contiguous commercial parcels have primarily zero-lot-line development and a continuity of commercial storefronts, which makes the area attractive area for pedestrians.

Traditionally, this commercial center served all of the entertainment and commercial needs of town residents with hardware, grocery and drug stores, restaurants, gas stations, and a movie theater. Businesses in this area are now a mix of small

specialty shops, restaurants, small food service (ice cream and coffee), personal services (nail salons and beauty shops), and real estate offices. Professional offices are generally located above the ground floor. San Anselmo Avenue is the location for most significant community events and gatherings. The Town Hall and public library are both located at the center of downtown.

Parking for employees and customers is generally not provided onsite, but on-street and in small parking lots within walking distance of the businesses. Lack of convenient parking has been noted as a concern by merchants and community members for several decades. The San Anselmo Avenue business area is subject to periodic flooding. It is also not readily visible from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, and easy for visitors to pass by.



2. OVERVIEW OF SAN ANSELMO

GREENFIELD AVENUE

Greenfield Avenue provides a wide range of commercial businesses including several gyms, a storage facility, a bar, physical therapy offices, professional offices, and retail stores (pet food, toys, clothing). Businesses in these areas do not rely on foot traffic for their customers and generally provide onsite parking for their employees and customers.

The lots in this tend to be larger, allowing businesses that need larger spaces and onsite parking. The businesses are very visible and adjacent to four heavily travelled lanes of roadway.



Figure 3 Greenfield Ave. looking west towards the Hub

OTHER AREAS

The Town has several smaller business districts including Red Hill Shopping Center, the “Limited Commercial” area between the Hub and Red Hill Shopping Center and a small commercial area on the “Miracle Mile” at the eastern entrance to the Town. These districts include a wide variety of retail, service and office uses. The Town has three

small neighborhood commercial districts that allow very limited commercial uses on properties within predominantly residential areas. The small businesses in these districts provide goods and services to local residents within walking distance. The current Town General Plan guidelines discourage business uses that will draw visitors from outside their local neighborhoods.

REAL ESTATE CONDITIONS

VACANCY RATES

As of December 2017, there are approximately 20 vacancies in office and retail spaces, accounting for 3% of the total floor area zoned for commercial uses. Administrative Draft Economic Development Plan December 7, 2017 2. Overview of San Anselmo 11

In Town staff’s observation, office spaces have not remained vacant long and most retail spaces have been filled fairly quickly. However, there are several storefront retail spaces that have been vacant for an extended period of time (over 6 months).

LEASE RATES

As of December 2017, the average asking rent for office/retail space was \$2.36 a square foot.



3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

The Town's local economy faces a number of issues that influence business success: national retail trends and internet competition; physical constraints including limited access and parking; retail centers and chain retail in the region.

The Town Housing Element 2015-2023 encourages development of housing in the commercial districts, which are close to shopping and transit. The Town modified its zoning regulations in order to allow development of housing in the Town commercial districts. Over the last two years, two apartment projects with no commercial component have been approved in the commercial districts. As the demand for housing is high, there may be more pressure to replace commercial development with housing in the future.

Recognizing these issues is an important step to identifying opportunities and actions to improve economic activity, while maintaining and enhancing San Anselmo's small town character and livability for its residents.

NATIONAL RETAIL TRENDS

With traditional U.S. retail in "dire circumstances", developers are refreshing traditional retail properties to more effectively compete with the Internet. Older properties are being reimagined as social destinations creating an environment that can't be recreated elsewhere, with a unique mix of retail, restaurant and entertainment space, and an emphasis

on food. According to current experts, successful retail projects need to have a sense of place and keep people walking through.¹⁹ These principles apply not only to traditional shopping centers, but also to traditional downtowns, although fewer tools exist to manage individual, separately owned private properties in a downtown.

OPPORTUNITIES

- While the Town can't dictate the specific tenancing of commercial spaces, Town measures and actions can encourage a desired mix and type of tenants, for example through focused outreach to incentivize desired tenants and types of businesses, and possible zoning limits to avoid concentrations of certain categories of businesses.
- Targeting small, locally-owned businesses with multiple locations in the region that also rely on internet sales may offer improved opportunities for long-term stability and success. The Town has many successful small businesses that succeed without these attributes, and these businesses should continue to be supported and retained.

¹⁹ San Francisco Business Times, June 23, 2017, "Emeryville Public Market undergoes refresh".



3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS RETENTION AND ATTRACTION

The Retention Study prepared for the Town describes business categories that can be retained and encouraged, and potentially increase capture of resident spending. Many of these types of businesses also can attract visitor spending. For example, businesses to be retained and encouraged, according to the Retention Study, include:

- Restaurants, bars and other food service businesses
- Health-related businesses
- Antiques and second-hand goods

The Retention Study identified other categories of businesses, primarily providing “residential support”

that should be retained and enhanced, and included retail as well as office-based services such as financial advising and medical services.

This chapter describes opportunities for maintaining and enhancing the businesses identified in the Retention Study, as well as other types of businesses important to the vitality of the Town.

Chapter 5 describes specific strategies, recognizing issues and opportunities that influence business location and success described herein.

RESTAURANTS, CAFES AND BARS

“Eating and Drinking Places” generate about 20 percent of the Town’s taxable sales. However, according to the Town’s survey of residents, over half of respondents indicated there were “not enough” restaurants.²⁰ Interest was also expressed in more “family friendly” restaurants.

The Town has a mix of restaurants, ranging from numerous full-service restaurants to small, inexpensive take-out locations with minimal seating.

Opening a restaurant can be a costly investment and lengthy effort, requiring numerous permits from the Town as well as the County; the Town has taken steps to facilitate the process of opening a new business in Town, although it has no control over County permitting agencies. Several restaurants and other businesses have utilized crowd-funding sources for capital.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Fast-casual, family friendly restaurants would be well received in San Anselmo.
- Additional full-service restaurants could benefit from the existing concentration of highly-rated full-service restaurants.
- Increased evening diners could improve the success of other after-hours activities along San Anselmo, particularly when other events occur downtown. Conversely, downtown events could benefit local restaurants. Live music can also function as a draw.
- Collaborative marketing via social media could promote the Town’s concentration of unique restaurants.

- When feasible, coordinate marketing of dining opportunities with other retail businesses particularly when stores are open later during special events.

- As noted below in “Sports, Fitness and Health”, opportunities may exist for small fresh juice bars that benefit from a health conscious, outdoors and sports oriented population. These types of businesses can also occupy relatively small spaces, an advantage in many older San Anselmo retail.



Figure 4 Marin Coffee Roasters

²⁰2016 San Anselmo Local Consumer Survey, Q1



3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

ANTIQUES AND HOME FURNISHINGS

The Retention Study identified furniture stores as a category of business that could be attracted to Town and antiques as a business that should be retained.

At one time, San Anselmo “reigned as the antiques capital of Northern California.”²¹ Over 30 antique stores and collectives attracted tourists and visitors

from around the region, however, the number of stores has dwindled significantly to about three. A number of factors contributed to the decline, including the recession in 2008, increasing rents, growth of internet marketplaces for antiques, and demographic changes. The antique stores that remain no longer represent a concentration to serve as a major attraction.

OPPORTUNITIES

- San Anselmo’s antique stores can be marketed as a unique offering, not widely available outside of the Town, in merchant marketing efforts; consider broader marketing efforts to include contemporary home furnishings, accessories, and related services available in Town.
- Home furnishings and consignment of furnishings could cater to local home improvement demand, offering high-quality furnishings and second hand and “useable” antiques at reasonable prices. This type of business will require a relatively large, warehouse type space with convenient parking.



Figure 5 Bank Street Antique Dealers

²¹“San Anselmo’s Antiques Shop Marks 40th year”, Marin IJ, July 21, 2017



3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

ARTS AND CULTURE

Art Galleries, Studios and Arts-related Retail

Several galleries occupy space in town, and artist studio spaces can be found in residential areas open during annual open studios. Approximately six galleries can be found in Town.

The Town's Arts Commission, in collaboration with local businesses, periodically sponsors exhibitions by local artists in restaurants and cafes.

Music

While Marin has a storied history of professional musicians residing in the area, and many local

performance venues, there are few music-oriented businesses. A popular locally-owned stringed instrument store has succeeded for many years on Red Hill Avenue; however, there are no other retail stores selling recordings or musical instruments.

Live music is popular at local events and cafes, and



helps draw patrons. Encouraging more live music can also reinforce a positive image of the Town as part of the Marin music scene.

Figure 6 *Painting of Local Musicians*

OPPORTUNITIES

- Music-oriented businesses could be offered sponsorship opportunities, and marketed in conjunction with the many local performances that occur in Town.



Figure 7 *Amazing Grace Music Store*

- “First Friday” and “Picnics in the Park” provide opportunities to showcase local musical talent while encouraging strolling in the Downtown, and contribute to the civic community. Opportunities to expand free music offerings in conjunction with special events could be explored, and supported.

- Other local events that promote music and the arts, combined with retailer involvement, could be promoted and highlighted in Town marketing.

- Increasing numbers of galleries in Town could provide a “nucleus” of businesses to create a “destination” for art enthusiasts. Marketing materials could promote close proximity of a concentration of galleries and restaurants within a short walking distance.

Public art can be encouraged and expanded, contributing to the Town's arts reputation.

- Additional public art and streetscape features could improve the shopping ambience of the Downtown and enhance various alley connections to San Anselmo. For example, walkways extending from San Anselmo Avenue could be enhanced with murals, flowers and plants, and other landscaping and street art. The Planning Department's “Urban Design Database” can be updated and provide guidance for improvements.



3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

SPORTS, FITNESS AND HEALTH

Marin County is known for its fitness and outdoors-oriented culture, and many of its storefronts are now occupied by businesses promoting healthy lifestyles. Fitness and dance studios, martial arts, yoga and similar businesses have expanded in San Anselmo. Along Greenfield Avenue there are numerous

businesses in this category; several adjacent fitness studios on Greenfield hold an annual competition along a short segment of closed street.

Retail outlets serving outdoors activities include several bicycle shops, and businesses selling outdoors apparel and footwear.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Sports events and demonstrations, similar to the annual CrossFit event on Greenfield, could be expanded to other types of sports and businesses, particularly in the Downtown.
- Opportunities may exist for small fresh juice bars that benefit from a health conscious, outdoors and sports oriented population. These types of businesses can also occupy relatively small spaces, an advantage in many older San Anselmo retail.
- A health-conscious community with an interest in alternative health practices can help support health product businesses. The Town recently lost a business that specialized in herbal remedies to San Rafael partly

due to lack of nearby parking; however, this type of business may have better prospects if well-located with good visibility and foot traffic.



Figure 8 Street Closure for Annual Fitness Event on Greenfield Avenue

- “Car free” days on San Anselmo Avenue, where the street is partially or fully closed to vehicle traffic, could attract cyclists and other fitness-minded customers to the downtown area and provide opportunities for expanded outdoor dining, outdoor retail and community activities.

BOUTIQUE AND SPECIALTY RETAIL

The majority of retail businesses in the Downtown, in addition to restaurants and cafes, are small, locally-

owned and operated specialty stores selling apparel, fashion and grooming accessories, and gift items.

OPPORTUNITIES

- There are opportunities for smaller-scale stores to share space with garden supply/nurseries. For example, spaces similar to the Gardener in Berkeley that also sell books, gifts, and other related items could be successful.
- The reuse of the former Sunnyside Nursery along Sir Francis Drake Avenue would continue to serve

local residents, and could attract residents from a broader area by a new nursery offering unique or specialized plants and services.

- Build on the Town’s traditional downtown and unique offerings to draw more visitors from surrounding areas.



3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

GOURMET AND SPECIALTY FOOD

In recent years a number of specialty food businesses have opened in Town, including a business

specializing in olive oil, a gluten-free bakery, and teas.

OPPORTUNITIES

- A concentration of specialty food stores offering regional items could complement the local chain grocery stores, and help promote products that are also likely to be sold online and by larger retail markets. Examples include Cowgirl Creamery, which

offers locally-produced cheeses and also provides a take-out counter, limited seating and prepared foods.



Figure 9 Display in Sugar candy store

OTHER LOCAL-SERVING GOODS & SERVICES

San Anselmo is well-served by grocery and pharmacies at the Red Hill Center, and at two other grocery stores in Town. Other stores such as pet supply can be found both at Red Hill as well as other locations.

The Town does not have a hardware store, which surveys indicate is a desired business type. However, there are national chain hardware stores in Fairfax,

Larkspur and San Rafael, including at the West End in San Rafael, that would intercept and compete with a San Anselmo hardware business.

The Town has a clothing consignment shop; these types of stores have done well in areas with above average incomes, such as San Anselmo, offering reasonably priced alternatives to major clothing stores in regional malls.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities may exist for additional consignment stores offering merchandise, such as furniture, in addition to apparel.



3. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

PERSONAL SERVICES

The Town has approximately 31 manicure/pedicure, beauty and hair salons in the Downtown and other commercial areas. These businesses attract customers who also patronize other retail shops, cafes and

restaurants. However, according to the Town's survey, over half of respondents indicated "too many"²² of these types of businesses.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The Town should consider the appropriate mix of various types of personal services in the Downtown area, balancing needs of residents for personal services, and increases in visitors and shoppers, against an excessive number of personal services occupying prime storefront locations.

- Many personal services could help to activate side streets, and don't require a prime location for those businesses not relying on visibility of passerby's.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Businesses and financial services help to support local businesses. For example, copying and shipping services can provide a vital support service to local

businesses. Other examples include banks, attorneys, notaries, and accountants that serve residents as well as businesses.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Highlight professional and business services available when marketing the Town to prospective, target tenants.

- Solicit and encourage participation by local professional services to support local public and non-profit activities, increasing local awareness of these companies and providing promotional and marketing opportunities.

²²2016 San Anselmo Local Consumer Survey, Q1



4. PUBLIC/NON-PROFIT ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

PUBLIC ART AND HISTORICAL ATTRACTIONS

The Town's historical museum maintains an extensive collection of photos and memorabilia documenting the Town's past and its evolution to current times. Docents periodically lead well attended tours of the Downtown, pointing out locations of historic significance. The Town's public art includes figures in Imagination Park of Yoda and Indiana Jones.



Figure 10 Indiana Jones statue in Imagination Park

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase the use of plaques to identify and memorialize historic structures and businesses in the Downtown, and provide access to walking tours through online media.

As noted above in the “Arts and Culture” opportunities, the Town’s “Urban Design Database” can help focus efforts on potential areas for public art and murals, and could be linked to data

- Promote additional public art opportunities in select locations by local artists. Consider modification of town sign rules to allow murals under certain circumstances.
- Consider applying for state or federal historic designation for the traditional Downtown area and market the designation.

on historic buildings. The Database identifies opportunities sites for murals in Town, although further work is necessary to clarify guidelines for public art.

BUSINESS PERMITTING PROCESS

The Town continually strives to facilitate the process of opening and expanding a business in San Anselmo. The Town’s website includes useful information to assist businesses (see Appendix A). Town staff

offer “pre-application” meetings with potential new businesses to coordinate the range of Town activities required to process business applications and building improvements.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Continue to expand and update the Town’s website with specific business requirements and process.
- Make step-by-step instructions for opening or expanding a business available as “hard-copy” at the Town’s front desk.

- Continue and expand Town outreach to the business community to improve communication and collaboration.



4. PUBLIC/NON-PROFIT ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

PARKING

San Anselmo merchants responding to the Town's survey assigned the greatest importance to their business efforts towards "improving commercial area parking".²³

The majority of parking available in the Downtown is unmetered, but time-restricted. Employees are granted permits to park in lots within walking distance to downtown. The limited supply of spaces, time limits, lack of turnover, and high demand during certain periods creates a disincentive for residents and visitors to patronize Downtown businesses.

The location and availability of bicycle rack spaces is also a consideration to enhance and encourage bicycle use. At certain peak times, bicycle rack spaces are unavailable, or occupied by bicycle sellers displaying their bikes for sale.

The Town is in the process of initiating a parking study. The Study will provide a range of options for Town Council consideration and implementation, which may include:

- Increased enforcement of existing parking regulations
- Modification of existing regulations to improve turnover and availability during key time periods in prime locations
- Improved signage to increase utilization of parking lots
- Development of shared public/private facilities
- Review, evaluation and modification of existing merchant/employee parking permit program
- Modification of parking configuration and striping to increase parking

The Town Public Works Department plans to complete the Parking Study by Summer 2018 for public review and discussion, and will be coordinated with other ongoing efforts by the EDC and Town, including the Wayfinding Study (see Signage and Wayfinding Opportunities, below), reconstruction of the Magnolia parking lot, and Town median landscaping plans.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Improved wayfinding, as a result of the current Plan that is underway, will facilitate accessibility by residents and visitors, and improve utilization of existing parking.

²³ 2016 San Anselmo Business Outlook Survey, Q16.



4. PUBLIC/NON-PROFIT ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events not only provide social activities for residents, but can also attract local residents to downtown area, bring in people from other parts of the Bay area and generate interest for people to return. One of the Town's largest annual events, the Art and Wine Festival, did not happen in 2017 after several years of declining participation since the Recession. However, there are numerous events that promote the Town and are valued by the community, including the Country Fair Day.

The Town's website includes a list of Town events, and the Town's emailed newsletter highlights upcoming events.²⁴ Current events include:

- Picnics on the Plaza
- Music in the Park
- Film Night
- Beatles Tribute
- County Fair Day
- Scarecrow/Fall Decorations Project
- Goblins Spooktacular
- Holiday Lighting Ceremony

The Town provides support to these activities by assisting with special lighting on buildings and trees, and facilitating events that require road closures, public safety, and maintenance/clean-up.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Encourage Chamber of Commerce to develop at least one annual special event in the downtown area that meets the Town special event criteria.
- Expand community group participation in local events to improve the events as well as provide opportunities for increased awareness of community and civic organizations. This increased participation may also improve the sustainability of local events.
- Increase the visibility and prominence of the events listings on the Town's website, and consider additional ways to publicize events.
- Seek opportunities to increase the "synergy" between special events and increased foot traffic at local businesses, for example by coordinating business promotions with events such as art walks.

²⁴ <http://www.townofsananselmo.org/index.aspx?nid=316>



4. PUBLIC/NON-PROFIT ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Many of the Town's signs are old, outdated, or do not provide adequate direction to parking or amenities. The EDC has indicated to the Town Council that the lack of proper signage results in a "missed opportunity".²⁵

Proper signage not only provides directions, but also can convey a positive Town brand and help attract visitors who otherwise may bypass San Anselmo on their travels through Marin. The EDC, collaborating with design professionals, has undertaken a study and

plan for the Town's signage. The signage plan will consider several factors, including:

- Function/Wayfinding
- Branding/Marketing
- Aesthetics/Character
- Operations/Budget
- Regulatory Compliance

The Plan is being coordinated with other Town efforts, including its Median Master Plan. Completion of a draft Plan is targeted for Spring 2018.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The wayfinding plan can include a hierarchy of signs and an opportunity for businesses located off of San

Anselmo Avenue and Sir Francis Drake to advertise on these primary streets to attract customers.

AMENITIES AND BEAUTIFICATION

The Town conducted a fundraising effort for a downtown beautification project in 1998-1999. The project resulted in new street trees, street lights, landscaping and entry monument/sign features.

The Town Public Works Department is preparing a Median Master Plan for the primary town medians. The project will result in a master plan of coordinated

median treatment options that the Town may select from when funding is available to pursue median landscape projects. One of the landscape projects has been funded. Each individual project will require a landscape plan and source of funding.

The Median Master Plan is expected to be completed in Spring 2018.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Upgrade alleys and bridge connections with public art, landscaping/flowers, streetscape, and maintenance. Continue Town activities assisting businesses with flood gates.
- Encourage preservation/enhancement of historic character (exterior and interiors) where possible.
- Enhance Town improvements through business

and community "sponsorships" of maintenance and streetscape amenities (benches, trees, public art, etc.).

- Create a façade improvement grant program for businesses or property owners who desire to make improvements to the façade of their buildings.
- Consider opportunities for "parklets", outdoor seating, and other amenities to improve the Downtown experience, increase capture of bicycle through-traffic, and attract visitors and residents.

²⁵ Update from the EDC, Minutes of the Town Council Meeting of January 24, 2017.

²⁶ The GNU Group is working with the EDC and the Town to develop a signage plan.

²⁷ EDC presentation to the San Anselmo Town Council, January 24, 2017.



4. PUBLIC/NON-PROFIT ACTIVITY & OPPORTUNITIES

MARKETING AND BRANDING

The Town Chamber of Commerce publishes an annual directory, which has marketing opportunities for local business. Town government marketing efforts have included:

Town government marketing efforts have included:

- In 2000, the Town retained a publicist to help market the Downtown area after the 2000 Downtown Beautification Project.
- The Town installs banners at prominent locations to promote Town sponsored events and encourage local shopping.



Figure 11 Ballerinas playing on Sugarfoot at Town Hall

- In 2017, the Town partnered with the Marin Small Business Development Center and held a series of workshops on marketing for local businesses.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop a unique city nickname and iconography that can be used in marketing materials to promote the Town. Some examples that have been used at different times include: “The Hub City”; “The City by the Creek”; “The Small Town with a Big Heart”. Sugarfoot, the statue of a deer in front of Town Hall, represents an example of a San Anselmo symbol.
- Encourage reviews on social media to publicize local businesses, and facilitate businesses taking ownership of pages on Yelp, Google, Facebook, etc.
- Develop online marketing materials, for example maps of related businesses, highlighting Town amenities, parking, historic tours, etc.
- Continue recent marketing workshops
- Coordinate Town marketing efforts with other ongoing activities such as the Signage and Wayfinding Study, and events and efforts of the Historical Commission and the Arts Commission.
- Enhance the Town’s website sections oriented towards promotion through visuals, links to other websites, descriptive text, interactive maps, links to social media sites, etc.
- Augment the Town’s website with more Town-specific business resources²⁸ that could include highlights of available spaces.

²⁸ See website page with resource links at <http://www.townofsananselmo.org/index.aspx?nid=898>



5. ACTION PLAN

This chapter includes actions to implement Town and EDC economic goals. The actions address opportunities and issues described in the Economic Development Plan.

GOALS

The Town's General Plan describes its primary land use and economic goals:

The small town character, scale, and pace of life in San Anselmo shall be preserved, as shall the

*Town's close connection with the natural beauty of its setting.*²⁹

*Maintain the economic viability of the Town's commercial core.*³⁰

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

The table that follows includes specific objectives and actions underway or to be implemented by the EDC, Town officials, and others. It is expected that this Action Plan will be constantly revised as progress occurs and conditions evolve in the Town.

Successful outcomes rely not only on EDC and Town progress, but also upon ongoing collaboration and cooperation with the business community, and support of Town residents.

TYPES & MIX OF BUSINESSES

1. Objective: Maintain a balanced and complementary mix of businesses serving residents and visitors.

1.1 Action: Complete an Economic Development Plan, to be updated periodically, to document current economic conditions, strategies and actions to achieve economic goals and objectives.

EDC: Complete Plan and present to Town Council (Spring 2018).

EDC: Initiate Plan implementation (Summer 2018).

EDC: Review and update Plan (Spring 2019).

1.2 Action: Complete an inventory of Town businesses, including vacancies, to track trends in business mix.

Planning Dept: Develop inventory (Summer 2018).

EDC: Integrate business inventory into Economic Development Plan and Action Plan (Fall 2018 - Spring 2019)

1.3 Action: Locate and implement a new business license program that can be used to maintain and update the inventory of Town businesses, including location of business and vacancies, to track trends in business mix. Integrate inventory into a tool

for mailouts and communications with business community.

Finance Dept: Identify and implement software, collection process, and integration into ongoing activities (Winter 2018).

1.4 Action: Identify desired types of businesses to fill vacant locations.

EDC: Create subcommittee to engage business community, commercial real estate brokers, industry experts and other interested parties (Fall 2018).

1.5 Action: Identify ways to attract desired businesses to fill vacant locations.

EDC: Utilize results of Action 1.4 to develop outreach strategies and collateral materials (Winter 2018 - Summer 2019).

1.6 Action: Consider changes to zoning regulations to facilitate desired uses.

Planning Dept: Review existing zoning regulations and permitted uses and present planning measures to EDC that could be used to help achieve appropriate mix of businesses and housing (Winter 2018).

EDC: Make recommendation to Town Planning Commission and Council (Spring 2019).



5. ACTION PLAN

BUSINESS PERMITTING PROCESS

2. Objective: Improve access to information and resources to facilitate the process of opening a new business or improving an existing business.

2.1 Action: Summarize and highlight the Town’s friendly, quick “one stop shop” for information about the permitting process on the Town’s website

to support of marketing and outreach by other entities including the Chamber of Commerce and real estate agents advertising commercial spaces.

Planning Dept: Refine existing website pages re: permitting, and prepare “hard copies” for distribution at the Planning Dept. counter (Spring 2018).

PARKING

3. Objective: Improve the convenience and availability of parking for visitors to the Downtown.

3.1 Action: Facilitate Downtown Parking Study.

Public Works Dept: Present draft Study to EDC for review and comment (Spring 2018).

EDC: Make recommendations to the Town Council (Summer 2018).

3.2 Action: Continue to enforce parking restrictions and increase enforcement of parking restrictions as necessary, considering results of Parking Study.

CMPA: Respond to Town requests and adjust services as appropriate (Summer 2018).

3.3 Action: Modify and publicize employee parking programs

Administration and Cempa: Create, maintain and publicize an informational program to educate employers and employees about the availability of appropriate parking areas and options, including the Town’s Merchant Parking Permits (Spring 2018).

Public Works Dept: Update and modify employee parking program as necessary in response to Parking Study (Summer 2019).

3.4 Action: Encourage public/private parking options based on Parking Study.

Administration and Planning Dept: Identify and explore opportunities for partnerships with landowners to utilize existing private parking lots for visitors and/or employees during periods when parking demand exceeds available spaces (Summer 2019).



5. ACTION PLAN

SPECIAL EVENTS

4. Objective: Provide special events to strengthen Town community, support local businesses, and promote the Town to visitors.

4.1 Action: Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to work closely with Downtown businesses to develop, market and implement special events that will draw residents and visitors to the Town.

EDC and Council Representative to Chamber of Commerce: Meet with and engage Chamber and business community to develop viable special event options (Summer 2018).

4.2 Action: In collaboration with the business community, identify ways to coordinate and enhance positive linkages between special events and business activity.

EDC and Council Representative to Chamber of Commerce: Meet with and engage business community to assure special events are coordinated to increase benefits to local businesses (ongoing as events are planned and permitted by the Town).

SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

5. Objective: Improve accessibility to the Downtown by visitors.

5.1 Action: Develop a Downtown Wayfinding Plan that attracts and directs visitors with signage that is consistent with and enhances the character of the Town in coordination with Marketing and Branding efforts (see #8).

EDC (Rich) and Town Staff: Present Draft Plan to EDC and Town Council for review and acceptance (Spring 2018).

5.2 Action: Initiate implementation of the Downtown Wayfinding Plan.

Public Works Dept: Develop a budget and timeline for the Plan (Summer 2018).



5. ACTION PLAN

AMENITIES & BEAUTIFICATION

6. Objective: Upgrade and beautify the Downtown and other areas of the Town through improved landscaping, streetscape, and other public amenities.

6.1 Action: Develop a Median Master Plan that achieves Town and Economic Development goals and objectives, and is consistent with other ongoing efforts, e.g., the Downtown Wayfinding Plan.

Public Works Dept: Present Draft Plan to EDC and Town Council for review and acceptance (Spring 2018).

6.2 Action: In conjunction with median and landscaping plans, consider opportunities for “parklets” and other areas for outdoor seating.

Planning and Public Works Dept: Review Median Master Plan for parklet and outdoor seating opportunities (Spring 2018).

6.3 Action: Increase public awareness of the Plan and provide opportunities for local businesses and property owners to contribute financially to the Median Master Plan project in coordination with other financing plans (see #9).

Administration and Public Works Dept: Develop and initiate a public outreach program with collateral materials (Summer 2018).

7. Objective: Reduce visual and economic detriment created by vacant storefronts and encourage activation of vacant space.

7.1 Action: Coordinate with Town Commissions (e.g., Art, Historical, Quality of Life) to identify, encourage and facilitate appropriate window treatments and “pop-up” exhibitions and other appropriate temporary use of vacant space.

Planning Dept: Identify options for review by commissions; work with property owners to implement desired options (ongoing).

7.2 Action: Maintain exterior of vacant, publicly owned, buildings with periodic landscape service and window washing. Determine feasibility of allowing these spaces to be occupied by pop-up businesses or Town Commissions (e.g. Art or Flood Control).

Public Works Dept: Adopt, implement and monitor program for ongoing maintenance of public buildings (Spring 2018).

7.3 Action: Review current regulations and enforcement activities related to litter, placement/ collection of garbage, and other public and private maintenance to assure an attractive physical environment.

Public Works Dept: Monitor conditions to assure standards and regulations are being met (ongoing).



5. ACTION PLAN

MARKETING

8. Objective: Develop a set of marketing materials, tools and strategies for co-marketing between the Town, local businesses, and other entities such as the Chamber of Commerce.

8.1 Action: Update marketing elements, including Town nickname, icon(s), and logo(s) in coordination with Signage and Wayfinding tasks (see #5).

EDC (Rich): Prepare collateral marketing materials and guidelines for use (Summer 2018).

8.2 Action: Prepare a strategy for enhancing online materials (e.g., social media reviews and sites; interactive materials; links to/from the Town’s website; coordination with Chamber or other groups to develop a “Visit San Anselmo” website).

EDC: Establish a subcommittee to engage and coordinate with Town staff, Chamber, and business community on marketing strategies (Fall 2018).

FINANCING

9. Objective: Identify and implement mechanisms to assure a sustainable source of revenues for area improvement.

9.1 Action: Evaluate feasibility of a Business Improvement District or similar tool.

Administration: Evaluate support for a Business Improvement District (or options), and if positive, pursue further implementation steps (Spring 2019).





Step 1: Find A Place For Your Business

Step 2: Determine Parking Requirements

Step 3: Consider Water Limits

Step 4: Disabled Access

Step 5: Permits and Inspections

Step 6: Business License and Taxes

Home > Community > Business > New Business Guide

New Business Guide



San Anselmo provides great opportunities for starting a new business or relocating your business. We want to help you start a business in our Town.

There are a number of issues that you should consider before signing a lease, buying property or opening a business. This information is designed to help you understand the Town permitting process and point you in the right direction for other agency approvals. As you move forward, please remember that Town staff are available and more than happy to help guide you through the process and direct you to where you may find more information.

Pre-Lease/Pre-Application Meeting

The town offers a FREE pre-application project review meeting where representatives of Planning, Building, Public Works and the Ross Valley Fire Department will meet with you to discuss your proposed business and to provide you with information on codes and inspections. Meetings are typically held Thursdays at 1:30 p.m. Appointments can be made through the [Building Department](#). Find the application [here](#). There is no fee for this service. You may always contact each department individually for information.

Step 1
Find a Location

Step 2
Consider Parking Requirements

Step 3
Consider Water Limits

Step 4
Disabled Access

Step 5
Permits and Inspections

Step 6
Business License

Quick Links

- [Assistance for Small Businesses](#)
- [Economic and Demographic Information](#)
- [Reducing Losses From Flooding](#)
- [Utilities, Garbage and Recycling](#)



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