

Meeting Notes

San Juan County Economic Development Summit

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

Brickworks, Friday Harbor, WA

Hosted by the San Juan County Economic Development Council

Attendees *(in order of signup sheets):*

Victoria Compton	Jack Yelverton	Bryan Hoyer
Jim Hooper	Lovel Pratt	Chris Thomerson
Jamie Stephens	Boyd Pratt	Nick Power
Mark Madsen	Colin Casabelos	Michelle Loftus
Jack Yelverton	Tom Kirschner	Marilyn Gresseth
Duncan Wilson	Peggy Bill	Candace Jagel
Sandra Frinell	Mike Sharadin	Rick Thompson
David Dubbell	Doug Rowan	Steve Hushebeck
Morgan Meadows	Derek Masselink	Don Wick
Maury Forman	Sylvia Olsen	Peggy Bill
James Wolf	Sam Boyte	Gary Franklin
Barbara Marrett	John Calogero	Tom Kirschner
Mark Anderson	Bruce Gregory	Tony Simpson
Stephen Robins	Marilyn O'Connor	James Wolf
Farhad Ghatan	Glenna Hall	Dan Post
Doug Rowan	Lynn Longan	Vince Dauciunas
Michelle Loftus	Rick Hughes	Milene Henley
Peter Kilpatrick	Laurie Orton	Steve Brandli
Chris Thomerson	Colleen Johansen	
Bryan Hoyer	Mike Ahrenius	

Next Steps:

- These meeting notes will be posted on the SJC EDC web site and participants will be notified of their availability.
- **ACTION:** SJC EDC will facilitate a follow-up session in about 6 months' time. The vast majority of participants expressed an interest in participating.
- Five interest groups were identified. Participants in each group expressed an interest in meeting again as a small group and discussing possible tactics for moving their selected strategies forward.
ACTION: At our follow-up meeting in 6 months, we will look to these groups to report whether they continued to have an interest in collaborating to

move these strategies forward and, if so, what progress might have been made. SJC EDC is available to provide support to these groups.

- ACTION: Each of us, in our conversations with other people and groups, can refer to the list of high priority recommended strategies, shown below as receiving 9 or more votes, as representing an agreed upon list of the most important local actions that could be taken to strengthen the San Juan County economy for the long term.

Interest Groups include:

Business incubator interest group:

Collaborating to discuss tactics surrounding helping new businesses get started and grow. Participants include: Marilyn, Doug Rowan, Bryan Hoyer, Ken Norris, Barbara Marrett, Tony Simpson, Gary Franklin, Mark Madsen.

Broadband interest group:

Supporting OPALCO as it discusses its role in possible broadband solutions: Vince, Glenna, Jim, Farhad, Victoria, others ?. Action item already identified will be for a few of us to speak as community members at the upcoming November 21st, at 8:30 am, OPALCO Board meeting, to be held in Friday Harbor.

Workforce Development interest group:

Helping to educate our younger work force to fill important roles in our economy.
Education / work source & youth
Identify industries / niche
Skills and deficiencies to be addressed
Create locally – get into schools
Local vocational training – funded
Participating: Dan Post – consultant; Sylvia Olsen – consultant; James Wolf – co-lead; Colleen Johansen – consultant; and Morgan Meadows – co-lead.

Salish Sea – San Juan Islands and Gulf Islands - as learning destinations:

Derek, Lovel, Boyd, and ?

Brand and Export interest group

“We would like to coordinate established talent/knowledge with people beginning businesses involving product export from San Juan County and the Gulf Islands.”
Participating are Steve Hushebeck, Sam Boyte, Peter Kilpatrick, Sandra Frinell, Tom Kirschner, Mike Sheradin, Stephen Robins, Nick Jones, and Michelle Loftus.

Results of Informal Evaluation at end:

Participants were asked to indicate by a show of fingers how they evaluated the day, on a scale of 1 – did not meet expectations, to 5 – exceeded expectations. The vast majority of participants scored the day a “4” or “5”, with a few “3’s” noted.

Group Prioritized Possible Actions:

Note: Number in parenthesis is the number of votes that the possible action secured from participants. Listed in decreasing order of votes.

(25) Develop broadband island wide 9 identify efficient, redundant, communication. Support the local co-op. Co-op owned communications. Re-education of community members by local co-op of the broadband challenge and opportunity.

(18) Develop a business incubator in an affordable communal space with great connectivity, shared support, systems, equipment, reception, et al. Port involvement. [Mentoring too – an idea added later]

(15) Education for our younger workforce. Develop good synergy between schools and labs. Identify industries that can become economic niches. Improve our work sources. Have industry skill panels. Local schools for local jobs.

(11) Identify, produce, and promote exportable business products with San Juan County brand.

(10) Establish the Salish Sea as a place of learning – connect internationally. Education as a business.

(9) Envision the San Juan Islands (and more broadly, the Salish Sea), as a model for sustainability – we are an isolated community that can be thought of as a microcosm for the rest of the world. Self-sufficiency, green, infrastructure, food production.

(5) More winter events – film festivals, conferences, retreats

(5) Create a business plan competition (contest) leading to businesses opening here

(5) Form a transportation benefit district (a taxing district) to invest in Friday Harbor infrastructure

(5) Facilitate inter-modal transportation connections

(4) Improve county-wide understanding of events and activities (calendar sharing) and community bulletin board that is authoritative. Facilitate and encourage face-to-face collaboration within and across islands.

(4) Maintain and strengthen our connection with our cultural identity as a marine, fishing, farming, and forestry community. Market locally branded products.

(6) Identify source of funding for permanent affordable housing. Encourage employer participation in affordable housing strategies.

(2) Make government regulations and zoning more business friendly.

Encourage mechanisms to facilitate public/private funding and collaboration in selected segments

Help young farming families gain affordable access to farmland.

Output of Brainstorming Discussions, by Table

Table A:

Barbara Marrett, Maury Forman, Mike Sharadin, Sam Boyce, Doug Rowan

Strengths of the current San Juan County economy:

- We have a highly educated populace
- (High priority) We have Orcas
- (High priority) Our perceived lifestyle is good
- We have year round good weather
- We have an entrepreneurship cluster
- People move here because they love it
- We love the quiet
- We have no crime
- Safe place to raise family
- Thriving arts community
- We have experienced work force
- We have a slow pace
- We have a clean environment
- (High priority) We are a world class destination
- We have no traffic (mostly)
- We have accessible shorelines
- We have shorelines where you can see whales
- We have a national historical park
- We have 1000 acres which are a national monument
- We have first run movie theatres
- We have 3 performing arts centers
- We (think) we are probably high on the gross happiness index (UN Index)

Weaknesses of the San Juan County economy:

- People don't want to come in winter

- (High priority) We have inconsistent revenue and lack of year round sustainable economy
- (High priority) We lack broadband connectivity
- (High priority) Lack of career opportunities for youth
- Lack of infrastructure for entrepreneurs
- We have burned out entrepreneurs
- Lack of \$15 minimum wage
- It's hard to make it through the winter with seasonal jobs
- We have empty lodging, restaurants, and shops for the winter

Strategies for strengthening the San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Develop broadband islands-wide
- (High priority) More winter events like Film Festivals, Music Festivals, Arts Programs, Conferences and retreats
- (High priority) Create a business plan competition (contest) leading to businesses opening here. Concentrate on youth for the competition.
- (High priority) Develop a business incubator in affordable communal space with great connectivity, shared support systems, equipment, reception, etc.
- Create an "innovation partnership zone" for destination development (designated by WA state by application to Department of Commerce).
- Collaboration between government, academia, and private sector.
- Work to attract a corporate clientele in the winter for conferences
- Work to create themed conferences.

Table B:

Jamie Stephens, Michele Loftus, Peter, Chris Thomerson, Sandra

Strengths of current San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Beauty
- Opportunities for new business
- Isolation
- Available services delivery, UPS, etc.
- Whales
- A "moat"
- College
- (High priority) Locally owned utility
- Image
- Citizens: adaptive, resourceful, [some] wealthy, contributions
- Art
- Museum
- Parks
- Beach access
- (High priority) Volunteerism

Weaknesses of our San Juan County economy:

- Poor public transport
- (High priority) Poor communications – lack of good cell phone coverage, et al
- No conference center
- (High priority) Access from mainland
- (High priority) Poor youth opportunities
- No business incubator
- Summer tourism overload
- Tourism maxed out
- Friday Harbor not trendy
- Lack of economic export
- (High priority) No manufacturing
- Cost of materials transportation

Strategies we can use to strengthen our economy:

- Green building education
- (High priority) Communications – internet, phone, cell phone
- Coordinate between islands
- Streamline regulations
- Education
- Shellfish export
- Entice high tech businesses
- Affordable housing
- Strengthen / broadcast image
- Buy local
- Identify and promote business / services where tourists spend \$
- Develop better parking
- Transportation: Ferry -> Eastsound -> Shuttle ?
 - Ferry -> Lopez Village
 - Inter-island boat shuttle other than Ferry docking
in Eastsound or Lopez Village
- Expand boutique businesses, e.g.: wedding industry businesses
- (High priority) Produce export products
- (High priority) New business / incubator services center
- Better utilize port property
- Public works projects – parks – beautification

Table C:

Colleen, Marilyn, Bryan, Jack, Duncan, Sylvia

Strengths of San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Natural beauty
- Human resources
- Boating
- (High priority) Rich history / culture
- Access to Canada
- Wealth – government, tourism
- Cheap electricity
- (High priority) Brand cachet
- Vibrant art community
- (High priority) Safe

Weaknesses:

- (High priority) Physical access for people and goods
- (High priority) Communications – electronic
- Political adversity
- Fear of change
- High cost of living
- (High priority) Lack of living wage jobs
- Public transportation: lack of information and consistency
- (High priority) Under-developed activities (museums, etc.)

[Facilitator note: Did not find flip chart page with strategies from Table C]

Table D:

Gary Franklin, Rick Thompson, Derek Masselink, Steve Hushebeck, Tom Kirschner, Rick Hughes

Strengths of the current San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Environment and natural beauty
- Food and restaurants
- Independence
- (High priority) Educated population
- Leaders are accessible
- Entrepreneurs
- Arts
- Community events
- Award winning schools
- Better medical care
- (High priority) Giving community
- Quality of life
- National monument

- Scenic byway
- Technology potential
- (High priority) Strong work ethic

Weaknesses of the current San Juan County economy

- (High priority) Lack of broadband and connectivity
 - Support local co-op
 - Engage “redundant” systems
- (High priority) Lack of year round transit
- “Brain drain”
- Lack of affordable housing
- (High priority) Lack of stable, year-round economy
- (High priority) Lack of middle class / family wage jobs
 - Promote off season retreats and conventions
 - Off-season events
- Lack of stable year round economy
 - Tax incentives to attract new business
 - Support for entrepreneurs
 - Support low cost business loan
- Lack of water resources

Strategies:

- Natural beauty / environment:
 - Promote agri-tourism
 - Promote land and water based wildlife viewing
 - (High priority) Make the Salish Sea a place of learning
 - Artist centers (colonies)
- Giving community:
 - Mentorship for businesses / start-ups
 - Engage community foundations
 - Possible investment vehicle / platform (bonds?)
- Educated population:
 - Mentorships
 - (High priority) Synergy between schools, labs, college / training
 - Promote alternative energy technology

Table E:

Tony, Laurie Orton, James, John, Don, Peggy Bill

Strengths of the current San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Beauty
- (High priority) Community involvement
- Private investment into public good
- High quality environmental quality
- (High priority) Local ownership / responsibility and commitment
- (High priority) Resourcefulness / self-sufficiency / entrepreneurial spirit
- Diversified artisan base
- Stewardship spirit in our remaining resource industries
- Strong and growing local ag industries

Weaknesses of the current San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Communications infrastructure
- Limited municipal facilities, eg: pools , municipal
- Isolation / accessibility
- Efficiency / volume / speed of transport: ferry system limitations, schedule, seasonal limitations
- Housing for seasonal workers: low/middle income families
- Lack of attractive local transit
- Resistance to change / growth
- Balkanization – non-unified solutions across county
- (High priority) Limited living wage opportunities
- (High priority) Affordability: Housing, fuel, food, land.

Possible strategies for effecting improvement that could be implemented from within our community:

- (High priority) Maintain connection and strengthen with our cultural identify (marine, fishing, farming, forestry)
- Increase speed / capability / volume / schedule for access / eg: high speed ferry
- (High priority) Intermodal transport coordination / sync intermodal connections
- Public / private collaboration for affordable housing
- Zoning adjustments to enable affordable housing
- Demand and support high speed volume internet... affordable to all and local
- Initiate public /private campaign to encourage local biz/ag
- Consider developing local energy generation. Nodal or ubiquitous / small scale
- (High priority) Envision San Juan Islands as a model of sustainability ... Capitalize on isolated system to try for self-sufficiency to max practical power/ water/ infrastructure /food

Table F:

Lovel Pratt, Vince Dauciunas, Glenna Hall, Mark Madsen, Milene Henley, Marilyn O'Connor

Strengths of current San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Good things include sense of community, watching out for each other, esp: kids.
- Emotional intelligence
- Integrated community across ages and economic stratum.
- Care about whole community, strengthen where we live.
- (High priority) Retirees drawn here by quality of life
- (High priority) Individual islands are diverse – different solutions per island.
- We can know who we buy from.
- Your reputation counts – can't cheat each other. Self-selected islanders.
- Spending patterns may be different from mainland.
- (High priority) Unique high value commodity - Branded with islands. Lots of small steps.

Weaknesses of our current San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Cost of transportation
- Lack of public transportation
- Small size of population
- (High priority) Lack of jobs – year round jobs
- Businesses are small (FTE)
- Lack of local product (food)
- (High priority) Lack of common goals (strong opinions and conflict)
- Unwilling to employ government to improve economy
- Difficult internal communications
- (High priority) Lack of affordable housing
- No voice in state legislature
- SJC last in rank of dollars to state vs stat benefit, per capita
- We want it to be just like the mainland.

Possible strategies:

- (High priority) Co-op owned telecommunications – needs public support of idea and investment. Need local ISP buy-in
- Invest in local infrastructure – trails, roads, main streets. Support government dollars for trails, paths, access.
- (High priority) Dollars to market local branded goods
- Examine local building codes to encourage improvement in aesthetics
- (High priority) Get ports to provide business incubator infrastructure – food, other, business park

- (High priority) Identify funding for permanently affordable housing (PHA) (REIT)
- Local transportation district (TBA)
- Support buy local programs
- Work force development
- Recruiting program to bring high value / small / knowledge based industry

Table G:

Boyd Pratt, Dan Post, Farhad Ghatan, Lynn Longan, Steven Robbins, Morgan Meadows

Strengths of the current San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Celebrating our history and cultural landscape
- High level of communication and social engagement
- (High priority) People have a giving nature. We enjoy helping each other.
- Strong sense of ownership to identify with this place
- Members are resourceful
- (High priority) Love of isolation and beauty – our natural environment. People want to be here.
- The Islander Way – quality of life contribution
- (High priority) Educational and economic diversity of population
- Safety of living here.

Weaknesses of the current San Juan County economy:

- (High priority) Communications: over reliance on one provider and lack of redundancy
- (High priority) Transportation: cost, inconvenience of ferry, potential disruptions, lack of broad range of transportation options
- Youth development / apprenticeships
- (High priority) Affordable housing: need to support more
- (High priority) Adequately skilled workforce: training and work ethic
- Over use of natural resources. For example, Shark Reef Park by visitors
- Community over-engagement
- Resistance to change, i.e.: pros and cons of broadband

Possible strategies for effecting improvement that could be implemented from within our community:

- Communications:
 - Develop a strategy for funding redundancy
 - Concentrate on face-to-face solutions
 - Strengthen the local presence / connections

- OPALCO could support / re-educate members on communication infrastructure
- Secure communication options
- Adequately skilled workforce
 - Improve local “work source”
 - Youth development programs including industry skill panels, insisting that local schools be used to train for local jobs, Community college / vocational development, Identifying specific industries that can become economic niches
- Affordable Housing:
 - For young farming families, base for ag, etc.
 - Zoning with common sense
 - Employer provided housing: Healthy attractive places, replacing substandard housing