

City of Langley

Mayor's Council on Economic Health

Top 10 Priorities for Economic Health

Increase Economic Diversity

Nurture current businesses and attract or incubate new businesses to create "interest clusters", to include retail stores, information technology/ high tech businesses, crafts, value-added food production, light "clean" industry and perhaps a larger, regional employer.

Foster the Idea that "Something's Always Happening In Langley"

Build on perception of Langley as vibrant year-round center for events, activities, entertainment, and experiences for both locals and visitors. Part of our brand promise is that Langley is a great place to live, learn, and play.

Build on Langley's Identity as the Cultural Center of South Whidbey

Strengthen A.C.E. (Arts, Culture, Education), as an essential component of Langley's economic persona, from which many of the other economic priorities and other local communities derive benefit.

Support Retail Businesses & Services

Determine what works for Langley, what doesn't. What's needed, and is it financially viable? What can merchants learn from each other?

Maintain Langley's Physical Beauty and Small Town Feel

Our most important asset is the beauty and friendliness of the town. This should be a key marketing point to potential residents, recruited businesses, and potential visitors.

Communicate our Image Effectively

Nurture the establishment of Langley's persona, and communicate it uniformly across all means of communications.

Nurture Marina and Waterfront as Economic Driver

Focus on the marina and our waterfront as economic drivers.

Attract and Retain Young Families (30-40 year-old demographic)

From jobs, to housing affordability, to activities, to eateries and pubs, do things to make Langley attractive to young families.

Leverage Langley's Image as a Creative and Progressive Town

Encourage innovation in green technology and other creative and progressive areas. Leverage this for economic gain by becoming a role model community and hosting related events.

Encourage Partnerships

Work with the Langley Chamber, Port of South Whidbey, educational institutions, and other partners to enhance Langley and the local economy.

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List of Potential Actions

Increase Economic Diversity

Nurture current businesses and attract or incubate new businesses to create "interest clusters", to include retail stores, information technology/ high tech businesses, crafts, value-added food production, light "clean" industry and perhaps a larger, regional employer.

- Identify what's missing in Langley and feasible by talking to merchants, businesses, residents, bankers, visitors, and owners of commercial property
- Identify regional (S. Whidbey) gaps by comparing to Clinton / Freeland.
- Partner with Island County Economic Development Council, Port of South Whidbey and local Chambers of Commerce to recruit potential businesses to fill missing slots
- Support formation of new businesses and growth of existing businesses through City policies and perhaps City-sponsored small-business workshops.
- Find commercial spaces that can be used as business incubators or short-term retail outlets.
- Offer tax incentives, grants, business resource liaison to expedite approvals, etc., to desired businesses.
- Offer day trips featuring various "interest clusters" in Langley to cruise lines, conventions, trip planners, and other large groups based in the Seattle area.

Foster the Idea that "There's Always Something Happening In Langley"

Build on perception of Langley as vibrant year-round center for events, activities, entertainment, and experiences for both locals and visitors. Part of our brand promise is that Langley is a great place to live, learn, and play.

- Market and create visibility for activities already happening.
- Sort thru current activities in order to identify an 'activity gap'. Foster a process to close this gap. Items should tie to ACE (Arts, Culture, Education) such as learning, experiences, music, etc...
- Coordinate and publicize activities and events through a calendar of events on several channels—Internet, e-mail blasts from merchants and B&Bs, kiosks at City Hall and the marina.
- Encourage more "experiences" at retail and other businesses. Use current resources to help businesses learn how to host them.
- Add new events attracting all ages that local businesses can be part of.
- Allow banners and other colorful temporary signage.
- Consider a seasonal weekend or monthly crafts market in a downtown alley, and spots for temporary businesses that offer novelty.
- Encourage spontaneous musical and other performances to keep streets lively.
- Encourage active people to come here through annual athletic events and promotion of our miles of beach and wooded walking, running, and biking trails
- Market to various niches, with garden tours, culinary tours, bookshop tours, etc.

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Leverage, Nurture, and Promote Langley's Identity as the Cultural Center of South Whidbey

Strengthen ACE (Arts, Culture, Education), as an essential component of Langley's economic persona, from which many of the other economic priorities and other local communities derive benefit.

- We may have an organizational or branding deficit. We may first have to articulate the ACE concept and people recognize the reality.
- Then we illustrate why this theme is important – both to Langley and the surrounding communities. Again, part of this is messaging – tell people why Langley is important to them. Help our neighbors to appreciate how a strong Langley is in their best interest.
- Consider creation of a nonprofit consortium to apply for and administer cultural grants and assist organizations and individuals active in the arts.
- Create a South Whidbey brand, with a website directory of Langley and South Whidbey artists and craftsmen with links, when possible, to their own sites.
- Encourage basing new knowledge-bases businesses, educational programs, and cultural centers here through identification of appropriate spaces.
- Consider positioning Langley as the creative and cultural center of Whidbey Island as a whole. If someone else is doing it, how do we do it better?

Support Retail Businesses & Services

Determine what works for Langley, what doesn't. What's needed, and is it financially viable? What can merchants learn from each other?

- Do the research. Asset mapping can identify missing elements, which might not be obvious. Feedback indicates that at least one other restaurant would be good.
- Define and market the "Shop Local, Eat Local, Play Local" story, e.g. – Did you know that you could do "x" in Langley?
- Build a "Marketing 101" program using peers to illustrate best practices. Ask local businesspeople who have mastered specific aspects of marketing or other essential business components to mentor others.
- Identify essential local businesses and help keep them healthy
- Encourage Langley businesses to partner with other businesses inside and outside of Langley for synergy in marketing, events, purchasing, etc.
- Encourage formation of new businesses to keep downtown core dynamic with the introduction of new people and stores.
- Increase public transportation to town nights, weekends, and for special events.

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Maintain Langley's Physical Beauty and Small Town Feel

Our most important asset is the beauty and friendliness of the town. This should be a key marketing point to potential residents, recruited businesses, and potential visitors.

- Keep the town low-rise and on a human scale with a mix of architectural styles.
- Provide lots of eye-candy on the streets of the downtown core with well-done window displays and signage.
- Add more sidewalks and bike lanes as possible.
- Protect the green belts, encourage gardens on vacant lots, add more pocket parks.
- Celebrate and maintain historic buildings
- Maintain the views and beach access, as well as the beach trail below First Street.

Communicate our Image Effectively

Nurture the establishment of Langley's persona, and communicate it uniformly across all means of communications.

- Be clear in communicating the core message (Brand Image) to the merchant community.
- Be specific (with examples) about what is "on-message" – and what is not.
- Develop & provide incentive to stay "on-message"
- Encourage joint and individual marketing efforts to stay on message and not dilute the brand.
- Continue the image through online, print, and other media, as well as through signage

Nurture Marina and Waterfront as Economic Driver

Focus on the marina and our waterfront as economic drivers.

- Work with the Port and private funding to improve the physical marina. One essential—fuel dock. Lack of fuel is a good reason for transient boaters NOT to stop in Langley.
- Build more transient docking, and allow visitor boats to moor for FREE for a certain amount of time – 4 hours is the usual at Port Townsend and La Conner.
- Keep the boat-launch ramp open. Sand build-up discourages locals from putting in at Langley.
- Work with the Port and the Harbormaster to use the marina to draw visitors to Langley.
- Find space for seasonal activities such as scuba or kayak rentals, guided tours to activities outside of town, scooter rentals, fishing, scenic boat trips, ice or food services, etc.
- Consider the establishment of a dive park or marine education center in partnership with schools, Port, foundations, or private investment.
- Work out a plan for parking at the marina.

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- Relax sign restrictions – visitors need clear mapping and an idea of what's available to get them up the steep hill into town.
- Make recreation convenient to participants with maps for divers, kayakers, bicyclists, etc.

Attract and Retain Young Families (30-40 year-old demographic)

From jobs, to housing affordability, to activities, to eateries and pubs, do things to make Langley attractive to young families.

- Work with legislators and transportation departments to make 'big city' job commutable by coordinating buses, ferries, and trains. (Even telecommuters have to go into the office a few days a week.)
- Consider other elements of business support, like expanding the Wi-Fi signal to make it more broadly available in town, or maintaining a "hot-spot" map, maybe as part of the City web-site
- Work to ensure scope of ACE (Arts, Culture, Education) provides experiences relevant to young singles and families.
- Identify an "Employer" strategy. Do we want many small, niche players with 10-12 full-time employees or one or two "anchor" employers, like a call center? Or a mix?
- Encourage building of more Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and duplexes for affordable housing that suits the town.
- Use Facebook and other social-networking sites to "bring the kids home"— hopefully with their own small businesses.
- Encourage brew pub or other "hang-outs" suitable to 20 and 30-somethings.
- Make sure SWSD provides quality education, and publicize the variety of other educational experiences available too.
- Publicize the wide range of recreational and creative options here that make the higher home prices worth it,

Leverage Langley's Image as a Creative and Progressive Town

Encourage innovation in green technology and other creative and progressive areas. Leverage this for economic gain by becoming a role model community and hosting related events.

- Identify "green" or "niche" businesses that already have a local footprint and encourage them to band together as a trade association to co-market. Suggest a template, sponsor / consult on building a marketing program for them.
- Identify Langley and local progressive activities of all sorts and explore possible links.
- Pitch the town as a great place for cultural creatives and early-adopters.
- Support and encourage the growth of cultural centers; day-long, week-end or week-long workshops and conferences; and joint activities and events that underscore this leading role.

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- Consider improvement of some fairgrounds buildings to have places for such events close to town.
- Make sure our infrastructure is reliable. Offer Internet and Wi-Fi access in city hall meeting rooms during power outages.
- Urge the SWSD and SVC to educate our children and re-educate adults for the jobs of the future.
- Offer workshops in the skills required for knowledge-based businesses to prosper.
- Pitch Langley as an ideal place for pilot projects in sustainability, energy conservation, city planning, green development, etc.
- Leverage our population of creative people to build a Langley creative brand.
- Encourage communal efforts in marketing and explaining various types of businesses, i.e. alternative medicine, agriculture or food-based businesses, etc, to establish a weightier presence for niche markets.

Encourage Partnerships

Work with the Langley Chamber, Port of South Whidbey, educational institutions, and other partners to enhance Langley and the local economy.

- Identify areas where the Chamber will lead and where City will take the lead.
- Explore partnerships with Freeland Chamber and local leaders in Clinton to recruit new businesses to South Whidbey.
- Work with the County Commissioners and Island County Economic Development Council to recruit new businesses to the island.
- Facilitate internships with specific university programs – focus on themes such that align with the Langley Brand—sustainability, creativity, culture, local food, etc.

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