

## DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MEMO

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**DATE:** 06/23/2025

**TO:** Planning Commission and Citizen Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Rebecca Lowell, Principal Planner  
Stacy Clauson, Senior Planner

**SUBJECT:** Review Draft #1: Economic Development Goals and Policies

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**BACKGROUND:** The attached document contains draft Goals and Policies for the Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan. As noted in RCW [36.70A.070\(7\)](#), the Economic Development Element must establish, “local goals, policies, objectives, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and a high quality of life”.

The attached draft Goals and Policies are exclusive to the Economic Development Element; and there are other Elements that will also be updated in 2025 and 2026. For example, the Housing Element will expand upon and will include additional housing related Goals and Policies. Similarly, the Transportation Element will expand upon and will include additional Goals and Policies regarding trails, vehicular traffic, multi-modal facilities, et cetera.

**REQUEST:** Review of, and comments on, the attached draft Goals and Policies for the Economic Development Element. When reviewing and commenting on this document please keep the following questions in mind:

1. Do the Goals and Policies reflect the values and needs of our community?
2. What stands out to you as particularly strong or important?
3. Are there any concerns or unintended consequences you see?
4. Is anything missing or unclear? Who might be left out?

The above suggestions are made in an attempt to avoid line-item editorial comments (i.e. grammar, sentence structure, and the like) because with the first several drafts of this document we need to focus on overall economic development strategies, concepts and longer-term possibilities versus focusing on less important grammatical details. Once the overall content is roughly right, a final draft will be reviewed to ensure its grammar, voice, and related editorial issues are addressed.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Following is the Vision Statement for the Economic Development Element adopted under the 2016 – 2036 Comprehensive Plan update that will also need to be updated with the Goals and Policies contained in the attached materials:

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT VISION:** *The focus of this economic development plan is improving the economic well-being of Mount Vernon through efforts that entail job creation, job retention, enhancing the City’s tax base and increasing the quality of life for those that live and work in Mount Vernon. This plan leverages Mount Vernon’s competitive advantages, key assets and core values to strengthen the City’s identity and promote future investment consistent with the community’s vision.*

The accompanying Goals and Policies are organized under the following headings:

- ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND RESILIENCY
- BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT
- LAND USE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH
- BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION
- PERMITTING PREDICTABILITY AND EFFICIENCY
- REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS
- DOWNTOWN RESILIENCY
- TOURISM AND CULTURAL ECONOMY
- ADAPTIVE REUSE OF UNDERUTILIZED SITES
- PRESERVATION OF INDUSTRIAL LAND BASE

**ATTACHED:**

- Draft #1 Updated Goals and Policies of the Economic Development Element

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT  
DRAFT GOALS AND POLICIES**

2016 GOAL, OBJECTIVE, OR POLICY NUMBER	2016 GOAL/OBJECTIVE/POLICY LANGUAGE	2025 NEW GOAL/OBJECTIVE/ POLICY LANGUAGE	TYPE/REASON FOR CHANGE	CITY COUNCIL, PLANNING COMMISSION, CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE & OTHER PUBLIC COMMENTS
<b>ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND RESILIENCY</b>				
		Goal 1: Foster a resilient and inclusive economy that supports innovation, local business success, job creation, and a high quality of life for all Mount Vernon residents.	New goal	
		Policy 1.1: Attract living-wage jobs by encouraging businesses that offer stable employment and upward mobility, particularly in sectors aligned with Mount Vernon’s strengths and workforce capacity.	Combined and simplified policies about living wage jobs and renumbered	
		Policy 1.2: Support inclusive economic growth by providing and/or partnering to offer access to job training, small business assistance, and workforce development programs for underrepresented and low-income communities. Facilitate connections to resources that promote entrepreneurship, career advancement, and equitable access to economic opportunity.	New policy	
		Policy 1.3: Invest in infrastructure and public amenities that improve the city’s attractiveness to businesses and workers, including transportation, high-speed broadband, parks, and cultural assets.	New policy	
		Policy 1.4: Leverage Mount Vernon’s quality of life and strategic location to attract and retain talent, remote workers, and companies seeking a central hub between major regional economic centers.	New policy	
		Policy 1.5: Foster innovation and entrepreneurship by supporting incubators, co-working spaces, and partnerships with educational institutions and business organizations.	New policy	

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		Policy 1.6: Regularly assess economic trends and outcomes to ensure that policies and programs are responsive to changing conditions and community needs	New policy	
		Policy 1.7: Consider establishing a dashboard of economic metrics to measure progress and benchmark against other cities in the region. Metrics should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal and household income</li> <li>• Income growth vs. Home price growth</li> <li>• Homes v. Jobs ratio</li> <li>• People v. jobs ratio</li> <li>• Median Home Prices</li> <li>• Unemployment rate</li> <li>• Public Safety measures                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Police Calls for Service per 1000</li> <li>○ Violent Crime per 1000 people</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Educational Attainment</li> <li>• Retails sales tax revenue</li> <li>• Retail sales tax revenue per capita</li> <li>• Value of retail and commercial construction built each year</li> </ul>	Renumbered	
		Policy 1.8: Consider measuring the business pulse through an annual business attitudes survey.	Renumbered	
<b>BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT</b>				
GOAL 1	Have a strong proactive position towards economic prosperity that promotes a positive civic image and establishes Mount Vernon as a preferred place for investment.	Goal 2: Actively promote Mount Vernon as a welcoming, business-friendly destination by leveraging the city’s high quality of life, strategic location between major economic centers, strong access to regional transportation corridors, and vibrant historic downtown. Use these strengths to attract investment, support local entrepreneurs, and reinforce Mount Vernon’s identity as a prime location for business and economic opportunity.	Revised goal to more specifically address economic development marketing and recruitment strategies	

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		Policy 2.1: Determine where the City’s competitive advantages lie and identify clusters of companies that can power growth.	Renumbered	
		Policy 2.2: Attract new businesses and industries that align with community values and economic strengths.	New Policy	
		Policy 2.3: Continue focusing on high tech and value added agriculture as new clusters to power growth.	Renumbered	
		Policy 2.4: Encourage retail business that increases the sales tax base of the City.	Renumbered	
		Policy 2.5: Leverage Mount Vernon’s fiber optic network to attract and retain businesses by expanding access to underserved areas, promoting it as a competitive advantage for high-speed connectivity, and exploring the establishment of the system as a regional utility to support economic growth across the region—similar to Anacortes’ regional water system.	Renumbered and revised policy language	
		Policy 2.6: Continue to utilize EDASC’s marketing and business recruitment talents to bring new companies to Mount Vernon.	Renumbered	
OBJECTIVE 1.1:	Provide an adequate job-producing land base to ensure an optimal number of jobs for citizens within the community, and to aid the community in paying for infrastructure and services.	Policy 2.7: Provide an adequate job-producing land base to ensure an optimal number of jobs for citizens within the community, and to aid the community in paying for infrastructure and services.	Objective 1.1 changed to a policy. This policy is one that others may want to discuss for possible deletion. New Goal 3 and Policies 1.1 and 1.7 address similar subjects.	
<b>LAND USE AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH</b>				
		Goal 3: Ensure that land use planning and infrastructure investment support long-term economic growth, job creation, and a high quality of life in Mount Vernon.	New Goal	

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Policy 1.1.1:	Consider working towards an adequate supply of commercial and industrial lands and supporting infrastructure to accommodate the City’s forecasted growth.	Policy 3.1: Ensure sufficient and well-located commercial and industrial land to meet the employment growth targets identified for the City of Mount Vernon in the Skagit County Population and Employment Allocation adopted by County-Wide Planning Policies.	Revised policy statement to emphasize meeting allocated employment forecast	
		Policy 3.2: Encourage mixed-use and residential development in general commercial areas and downtown to increase housing near existing jobs, support small businesses, and promote vibrant, walkable neighborhoods. Prioritize projects that reduce commuting distances, enhance multimodal access, and strengthen the connection between where people live and work.	New policy	
		Policy 3.3: Plan for freight mobility and transportation access that supports industrial and logistics uses while minimizing impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.	New policy	
		Policy 3.4: Consider initiatives to support redevelopment of underutilized commercial and industrial properties through incentives, public-private partnerships, and cleanup of contaminated sites where needed.	New policy	
		Policy 3.5: Ensure robust infrastructure and utilities exist to foster economic growth and prosperity.		
		Policy 3.6: Integrate economic development goals into capital improvement planning by aligning public infrastructure investments with areas of job growth and private-sector interest. Prioritize projects—such as alleviating congestion on College Way—that improve mobility, support business activity, and enhance access to key commercial and employment areas.	New policy, also incorporates	
Policy 1.1.2:	<del>Consider creating a Mount Vernon specific definition for living wage jobs.</del>		Consolidated and moved to Policy 1.1	
Policy 1.1.3:	<del>Consider establishing a target of living wage jobs-to-housing ratio for the City.</del>		Consolidated and moved to Policy 1.1	

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OBJECTIVE 1.2:	<del>Determine where the City's competitive advantages lie and identify clusters of companies that can power growth.</del>		Moved to Policy 2.1	
		Policy 3.7: When feasible give priority to transportation system planning and improvements that ensure the efficient transport of goods and convenient access for workers of customers to and from places of business.	Renumbered	
		Policy 3.8: Focus efforts on operation and expansion of fiber optic broadband system.	Renumbered	
		Policy 3.9: Encourage Skagit PUD to improve water service to the Cedardale Road area of South Mount Vernon <sup>1</sup>	Renumbered	
		Policy 3.10: Provide for pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit access along identified transit arterials and encourage more intensive commercial development at major nodes in the street and transit network, to reduce dependency on automobiles.	Renumbered	
		Policy 3.11: Permit home occupations that are low-impact and do not significantly alter the residential character, scale, or livability of the surrounding neighborhood.	Addresses CPPP 5.2	
		Policy 3.12: Expand high-speed broadband infrastructure into West Mount Vernon to support equitable access to digital services, enhance economic opportunities, enable remote work and education, and improve quality of life for residents and businesses <sup>2</sup> .	New policy	
<b>BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION</b>				
		Goal 4: Support the growth and long-term success of existing businesses in Mount Vernon by fostering a stable, responsive, and business-friendly environment.	New goal	

<sup>1</sup> Staff will coordinate with Public Works and Skagit PUD to determine whether this policy has been achieved. If so, it will be eliminated.

<sup>2</sup> Staff will coordinate with Public Works and Information Technology Department to determine existing infrastructure improvements and feasibility. If this is already in place or not feasible, policy will be eliminated.

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Policy 1.2.1:	Maintain the City’s focus on local companies that demonstrate high growth potential; and continue to embrace the growing health care cluster led by Skagit Regional Health.	Policy 4.1: Maintain the City’s focus on local companies that demonstrate high growth potential; and continue to embrace the growing health care cluster led by Skagit Regional Health.	No change	
Policy 1.2.2:	<del>Continue focusing on being a “connected” city by expanding and marketing the City’s fiber optic loop. Consider establishing the city’s system as a regional utility similar to that of the City of Anacortes’ regional water system.</del>		Moved to Policy 2.5	
Policy 1.2.3:	<del>Continue focusing on high tech and value added agriculture as new clusters to power growth.</del>		Moved to Policy 2.3	
Policy 1.2.4:	<del>Focus on those areas that provide living wage jobs, such as: Management of Companies and enterprises, Utilities, Manufacturing, Finance and Insurance, Construction, Professional and Technical Services, Mining, Wholesale Trade, Government, Information, and Transportation and warehousing.</del>		Consolidated and moved to Policy 1.1	
Policy 1.2.5:	<del>Continue to utilize EDASC’s marketing and business recruitment talents to bring new companies to Mount Vernon.</del>		Moved to Policy 2.6	
Policy 1.2.6:	<del>Focus on education and job creation to help lower income citizens become upwardly mobile.</del>		Reflected in Policy 1.2	
<b>PERMITTING PREDICTABILITY AND EFFICIENCY</b>				
OBJECTIVE 1.3:	<del>To the extent possible, make local and regional planning inclusive and flexible.</del>	Goal 5: Ensure that permitting processes are transparent, predictable, and efficient. Continue to adapt the City’s permitting approach to meet the changing needs of businesses and support sustainable economic growth.	New goal including portions of Objective 1.3	
Policy 1.3.1:	Consider using pilot programs to move faster and lessen risk of new initiatives.	Policy 5.1: Consider using pilot programs to move faster and lessen risk of new initiatives.	No change	
Policy 1.3.2:	Regularly solicit input from local businesses through conversations with industry leaders.	Policy 5.2: Regularly solicit input from local businesses through conversations with industry leaders.	No change	

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Policy 1.3.3:	Continue to provide predictable, current, clear and concise regulations and permitting processes.	Policy 5.3: Continue to provide predictable, current, clear and concise regulations and permitting processes.	No change	
Policy 1.3.4:	<del>Consider measuring the business pulse through an annual business attitudes survey.</del>		Moved to Policy 1.8	
Policy 1.3.5:	<p><del>Consider establish a dashboard of economic metrics to measure progress and benchmark against other cities in the region. Metrics should include:</del></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>● Personal and household income</del></li> <li><del>● Income growth vs. Home price growth</del></li> <li><del>● Homes v. Jobs ratio</del></li> <li><del>● People v. jobs ratio</del></li> <li><del>● Median Home Prices</del></li> <li><del>● Unemployment rate</del></li> <li><del>● Public Safety measures</del> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>○ Police Calls for Service per 1000</del></li> <li><del>○ Violent Crime per 1000 people</del></li> </ul> </li> <li><del>● Educational Attainment</del></li> <li><del>● Retails sales tax revenue</del></li> <li><del>● Retail sales tax revenue per capita</del></li> <li><del>● Value of retail and commercial construction built each year</del></li> </ul>		Moved to Policy 1.7	
<b>REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS</b>				
		Goal 6: Strengthen regional economic partnerships to align strategies, leverage shared resources, and enhance Mount Vernon’s role as a key hub within the broader regional economy.	New goal	
Policy 1.3.6:	<p>When possible, seek out opportunities to collaborate and regionally plan with entities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Skagit County</li> <li>● Skagit Public Utility District #1( Water Utility)</li> <li>● Skagit Regional Health</li> <li>● EDASC</li> <li>● Skagit Valley College</li> </ul>	<p>Policy 6.1: When possible, seek out opportunities to collaborate and regionally plan with entities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Skagit County</li> <li>● Skagit Public Utility District #1( Water Utility)</li> <li>● Skagit Regional Health</li> <li>● EDASC</li> <li>● Skagit Valley College</li> </ul>	No change	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mount Vernon and Sedro Woolley School Districts</li> <li>• Puget Sound Energy( Electric utility)</li> <li>• WSDOT</li> <li>• Development Community</li> <li>• Engineering Community ( Engineering Standards)</li> <li>• Citizen Focus Groups and Advisory Committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mount Vernon and Sedro Woolley School Districts</li> <li>• Puget Sound Energy( Electric utility)</li> <li>• WSDOT</li> <li>• Development Community</li> <li>• Engineering Community ( Engineering Standards)</li> <li>• Citizen Focus Groups and Advisory Committees</li> </ul>		
		<p>Policy 6.2: Collaborate with regional partners to align economic development strategies, pursue grant opportunities, and amplify Mount Vernon’s role within the broader regional economy.</p>	<p>New policy</p>	
		<p>Policy 6.3: Collaborate with regional agencies and jurisdictions—including Skagit County, neighboring cities, tribal governments, and regional economic development organizations—to coordinate on economic planning, workforce development, and infrastructure investments.</p>	<p>New policy</p>	
		<p>Policy 6.4: Participate in regional marketing and business recruitment efforts to promote Mount Vernon as a strategic location for business investment and innovation within the I-5 corridor.</p>	<p>New policy</p>	
		<p>Policy 6.5: Support regional transportation and infrastructure projects that improve mobility, goods movement, and economic connectivity between Mount Vernon and other employment and population centers.</p>	<p>New policy</p>	
<p>OBJECTIVE 1.4:</p>	<p><del>Ensure robust infrastructure and utilities exist to foster economic growth and prosperity.</del></p>		<p>Moved to Policy 3.5</p>	
<p>Policy 1.4.1:</p>	<p><del>When feasible give priority to transportation system planning and improvements that ensure the efficient transport of goods and convenient access for workers of customers to and from places of business.</del></p>		<p>Moved to Policy 3.6</p>	

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Policy 1.4.2:	Focus efforts on improvement of parking in the downtown as well as continue efforts to alleviate congestion on College Way.		Incorporated into Policy 3.6	
Policy 1.4.3:	Focus efforts on operation and expansion of fiber optic broadband system.		Moved to Policy 3.8	
Policy 1.4.4:	Encourage Skagit PUD to improve water service to the Cedardale Road area of South Mount Vernon		Moved to Policy 3.9	
<b>DOWNTOWN RESILIENCY</b>				
OBJECTIVE 1.5:	Have a strong proactive position towards revitalization of the downtown as a preferred place to live, work, and play.	Goal 7: Take a strong, proactive role in revitalizing downtown as a preferred place to live, work, and play.	New Goal that was objective 1.5 – reworded in active voice	
		Policy 7.1: Update the Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan to reflect current community needs, market conditions, and revitalization goals—ensuring it serves as a strategic guide for land use, infrastructure investment, economic development, historic preservation, and public realm improvements in downtown Mount Vernon.	New policy	
Policy 1.5.1:	Consider new library and fire station in the downtown to establish the city’s commitment to downtown revitalization.	Policy 7.1: Use the siting of key civic facilities—such as a fire station or City and County municipal buildings - as catalytic investments to support downtown revitalization, attract private development, increase foot traffic, and strengthen downtown’s role as the heart of Mount Vernon.	Revised to reflect that library commons has been completed	
Policy 1.5.2:	Encourage public/private partnerships to advance the revitalization of the downtown.	Policy 7.2: Encourage public/private partnerships to advance the revitalization of the downtown.	No change	
Policy 1.5.3:	Consider establishing metrics to measure the vitality of the downtown to include number of filled/empty storefronts.	Policy 7.3: Consider establishing metrics to measure the vitality of the downtown to include number of filled/empty storefronts.	No change	

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Policy 1.5.4:	Encourage events, concerts and festivals to be held downtown throughout the year to establish the downtown as our social and cultural center and a source of community pride.	Policy 7.4: Encourage events, concerts and festivals to be held downtown throughout the year to establish the downtown as our social and cultural center and a source of community pride.	No change	
		Policy 7.5: Consider establishment of historic preservation incentives, such as the Special Valuation Program, to offer property tax reduction for eligible improvements to historic buildings	New policy	
		Policy 7.6: Consider supporting the creation of a Certified Local Government program, allowing owners of historic buildings to benefit from financial grants, tax incentives, and technical assistance from the State Historic Preservation Office.	New policy	
Policy 1.5.5:	<del>Consider establishment of design guidelines for the historic sector of the downtown to preserve, protect, enhance and perpetuate elements of our distinctive and unique small town heritage.</del>		Completed	
Policy 1.5.6:	<del>Consider establishing incentives for redevelopment throughout the city to include permit and impact fee and system development fee reductions.</del>		Deleted, as there are legal limitations to exemption and fee reductions	
<b>TOURISM AND CULTURAL ECONOMY</b>				
OBJECTIVE 1.6:	Enhance and support tourism in Mount Vernon	Goal 7: Promote Mount Vernon as a vibrant cultural destination by celebrating its historic downtown, agricultural legacy, and natural beauty—enhancing tourism, supporting local businesses, and enriching the community’s sense of place.	New Goal that was Objective 1.6	
Policy 1.6.1:	Grow the city’s tourism through special events that are consistent with the community’s values.	Policy 7.1: Grow the city’s tourism through special events that are consistent with the community’s values.	No change	
Policy 1.6.2:	Promote tourism using multiple media outlets and highlight the community assets.	Policy 7.2: Promote tourism using multiple media outlets and highlight the community assets.	No change	

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Policy 1.6.3:	Continue to emphasize the City’s connection to its rich history to strengthen our community identity.	Policy 7.3: Continue to emphasize the City’s connection to its rich history to strengthen our community identity.	No change	
<b>ADAPTIVE REUSE OF UNDERUTILIZED SITES</b>				
OBJECTIVE 1.7:	Expand the retail and office base within the City.	Goal 8: Encourage the adaptive reuse and redevelopment of aging or underused retail spaces to support economic resilience, community needs, and evolving market trends.	New goal that was Objective 1.7	
Policy 1.7.1:	<del>Encourage retail business that increases the sales tax base of the City.</del>		Moved to Policy 2.4	
		Policy 8.1: Encourage the adaptive reuse and redevelopment of large or aging retail spaces to accommodate new business types while maintaining a focus on uses that generate sales tax revenue.	New policy	
		Policy 8.2: Promote mixed-use redevelopment of underutilized commercial sites that includes active ground-floor retail or service-oriented uses that contribute to the city’s tax base.	New policy	
		Policy 8.3: Support flexible zoning and development standards that allow for innovative retail formats and hybrid business models (e.g., showroom/warehouse, experiential retail; work/live units, etc.) while preserving opportunities for taxable sales activity.	New policy	
		Policy 8.4: Target recruitment efforts in the City’s General Commercial land use district toward businesses and industries that generate strong sales tax revenues, while prioritizing those that are compatible with residential uses and contribute to the creation of vibrant, walkable, and livable mixed-use areas.	New policy	
		Policy 8.5: Partner with property owners and developers to reposition large, underperforming retail sites for higher value uses that retain or expand retail opportunities while integrating complementary uses such as housing, healthcare, or education.	New policy	

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Policy 1.7.2:	Ensure an adequate amount of land is designated for retail/commercial uses based on site characteristics, market demand, community need, and adequacy of facilities and services.		Addressed by Policy 3.1	
Policy 1.7.3:	Provide for pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit access along identified transit arterials and encourage more intensive commercial development at major nodes in the street and transit network, to reduce dependency on automobiles.		Moved to Policy 3.10	
<b>PRESERVATION OF INDUSTRIAL LAND BASE</b>				
OBJECTIVE 1.8:	Sustain and expand the current industrial and manufacturing employment base.	Goal 9: Sustain and expand the current industrial and manufacturing employment base.	New goal that was Objective 1.8	
Policy 1.8.1:	Protect the existing inventory of commercial and industrial parcels from conversion to non-industrial uses.	Policy 9.1: Protect the existing inventory of industrial parcels from conversion to non-industrial uses.	Revised to focus on industrial lands	
		Policy 9.2: Regularly review and update permitted and conditional uses in industrial zones to ensure they align with the City's economic development goals. Consider removing or restricting non-industrial uses that contribute to the incremental loss or underutilization of industrial land needed for job-generating activities.	New policy	