



**Fort Bragg 2020**

**A Story of Opportunities**

**and Possibilities**

It is twenty years in the future, and we,  
along with our children and grandchildren,  
just love living here on the beautiful north  
coast in our favorite town - Fort Bragg!

The Fort Bragg City Council and key staff members recently met for an all day planning session. Besides identifying their action priorities for the next two years, they also shared their long term vision for what Fort Bragg might be like two decades into the future. They imagined that the folks of Fort Bragg had succeeded in coaxing, designing, cooperating, and creating, an ideal future. Much was built, and much was preserved. Here are the instructions and questions that guided their exploration.

***Workshop conducted in March, 2009***

Doug Hammerstrom, Mayor

Dave Turner, Vice-Mayor

Dan Gjerde, Councilmember

Meg Courtney, Councilmember

Jere Melo, Councilmember (not present at workshop)

Linda Ruffing, City Manager

Dave Goble, Public Works Director

Marie Jones, Community Development Director

Mark Puthuff, Police Chief

Pat Frost, Finance Director

Cindy VanWormer, City Clerk (not present at workshop)

Charles Bush, Facilitator

*Story: Charles Bush Photography: Ron Bloomquist*

## **Why do we love it?**

What is it like to live here? What makes it a good place to live and grow and enjoy with our families and neighbors?

Let's collect some pieces of our future - the one we collectively want, and the core beliefs that guided us. Let's be realistic, but let's not be limited by what we don't quite know how to do yet - either politically, economically, or technically. Let's make this part plan and part wish.



## **The Culture of Fort Bragg - An Engaged Community?**

What does it actually look and feel like to wander around the town. What might I experience at different times of the day, different days of the week, during different seasons. What's going on - what are people doing? Who lives here? What is the culture like? What community values guided us, and what community values emerged as we progressed?

## **The Environment of Fort Bragg - A Healthy Small-Town Atmosphere?**

What is the condition of the infrastructure. How are energy, transportation, food and water, health care, and education being handled? What services and opportunities are available? What environmental values guided us, and what environmental values emerged as we progressed?

## **The Economy of Fort Bragg - Diversified, prosperous and sustainable?**

What and how are local businesses doing? Who has invested in Fort Bragg and why? What is the pattern of jobs available? Who are the major employers and players in the local economy? Are there opportunities across generations? What economic values guided us, and what economic values emerged as we progressed?



# **Infrastructure/Environment**

## **Role of City Government**

Much of what we accomplished was driven by a city government that led the way to a highly integrated and regional planning process that got way out ahead of funding, and allowed us to meet new money with well conceptualized projects. This approach also allowed the private sector and non-governmental agencies to easily and securely coordinate their considerable efforts toward goals the whole community favored and supported. Everybody was able to do their part, and the coordinated result was far more than just the the sum of those parts.

## **Energy Management**

Because we spent a decade on stopping energy and water waste and increasing efficiency, our usage significantly decreased. After the city initiated an integrated north coast regional energy planning effort, there was effective coordination of conservation efforts, decentralized small scale energy generation, and as appropriate technology was developed, some larger biomass conversion projects. We became "early adopters" of the best new energy technology at every appropriate scale. The growth in both equipment installation and maintenance, as well as the fabrication of generation equipment, created jobs and wealth, as well as moving us toward more energy independence locally. Convenient public and private transportation sharing has immensely reduced fluid fuel usage and transportation energy costs - previously a large part of coast energy usage.

Our integrated regional energy planning allowed us to coordinate with state and federal incentives, grants and loan programs, and revitalized local financial institutions who focused on capitalizing small scale energy projects and household generation efforts. Hundreds of small decentralized energy generation projects of all different kinds, anchored by solar roofing, came on line. Bit by bit the coast moved toward energy independence, with the added bonus of keeping all the power producing and water management jobs and development here at home. Nearly everyone catches and stores water, and has some kind of grey water reuse on site, reducing municipal demand. We preheat our water with the sun, and store heat in our buildings. We no longer make garbage, just raw materials for the next use. Waste transformation and usable product life extension happens everywhere - creating lively new businesses.

## **Transportation**

An extensive electric bus service combined with several creative approaches to ride share networks provides everyone with clean efficient transportation to everywhere. The same network moves most of our stuff around. Light rail is being developed for a link to the inland valley and newly developed marine shipping technology has helped with the revitalization of the Harbor. Air transport of goods and people has expanded with the help of new appropriately scaled technology. Bike lanes, trails, parking and zones are everywhere. Alternative fuels and charging stations are widely available, with electric/hybrid vehicle use expanding. Warehouse hubs serve the coast/inland valley link which brought efficiency and flexibility to the transport of goods.

The local universal broadband network utility has linked local businesses, local consumers, and the intricate transportation network - saving hundreds of separate business and shopping trips daily. The revitalized town center has become a lovely strolling zone, filled with local culture and companionship. Visitors often park their cars upon arrival, and don't drive at all while enjoying the north coast. Technological advances allowed us to move utility distribution underground and light our streets and buildings with minimal impact on the dark night sky.

### **Green Buildings**

Flexible green building guidelines and highly creative diversified planning, zoning and tax incentives have encouraged building in and up to allow all kinds of housing communities to emerge. Clustering, cooperatives, integrated cottage industries and decentralized neighborhood focused services and commerce have reinvigorated neighborhoods and encouraged diversity. New approaches to creating a variety of types of rentable spaces increased low cost, clever, and delightful shelter. Custom green building design and construction requires a lot of skilled workers. Most of the older houses have been energy audited and retrofit, cutting total housing energy use considerably.



The city encouraged the development of a non-profit Coast Building Advisory Institute which worked with

county, city and state agencies to construct guidelines for new and retrofitted green buildings. They aggressively utilize every possible financial incentive from governmental agencies, the construction industry, and private grant sources to maximize housing efficiency at the lowest possible cost to owners. The Institute operates a center showcasing the latest materials and techniques for comfortable, efficient buildings and mechanical systems, and provides hands on design assistance free to all residents. Ingenious local inventors and designers have responded by creating a lively range of new enterprises, exporting ideas, goods and services prototyped and installed first here on the coast.

### **Expansion of the Commons**

As various new projects emerged as desirable additions to the capacity of the coast to serve its residents, and attract visitors without becoming another “coastal theme park” type of community, the “Many New Centers” plan took shape. Eventually we added: the Industrial Arts Center which housed a fine woodworking gallery; the Marine Research Center which located on the south end of the old mill site; the Pomo Cultural Center which became a favorite visitor destination; the expanded College of the Redwoods campus with an increased range vocational training programs and gradually developing four year degree programs; the completed City Surrounded By Parks project offered one of the finest natural coastal community trails and outdoor recreation opportunities in the state; a small state of the art hospital emerged, incorporating the finest technologies for supplying long distance medical services; and the new Convention Center anchors the vibrant and diversified tourist segment of the economy.



# Economics

## Successful Planning

What a difference three decades make in the life of a community. Devastated first by the decline of the timber industry and the closing of the mill, then by the near collapse of the fishing industry, the townfolk responded with courage, ingenuity and hard work to redefine and revitalize Fort Bragg. City government coordinated the views and skills of the community as we worked through the long and complex task of developing a plan for the mill site. With an eye on our history, and a determination to maintain our small town virtues, we sought out the best new technologies and the newest economic possibilities. Recognizing the power of localization and sustainability we rebuilt our economy, and in the process fully integrated the opportunities of the mill site with our vision for the whole community.



## **Money from Home**

Economically we analyzed what could be grown, made, or provided here rather than bought elsewhere, and provided incentives, training and investment capital to seed that transformation. We created a lot of small, light manufacturing and production jobs and service businesses.

Once we recognized the investment wealth of new arriving, and local retirees, financial instruments were created to encourage that wealth to be invested locally at good rates of return - fueling local productivity. By increasing the availability of mortgage money and the creation of a local credit card business, we have really put a dent in the amount of capital leaving the community each month. A wonderful side effect was that those retiring elders, after investing their money locally, began using their considerable business and technical skills to help the business and financial communities, thus insuring their investment success, and providing the coast with a new brain trust to call on. We grew productively in education, food production, small fabrication and manufacturing, tourism, retail, and the arts.

## **Using Our Resources Wisely**

We have revitalized both our forest and marine based resources. Aided by new technologies and new understanding of biological cycles, our coastal fisheries have significantly recovered, as have the forests. Each is now being managed for ecological health and sustained economic productivity. We harvest and use the appropriate types and amounts of both timber and fish, and businesses that add value to both of those raw resources are thriving. We don't export fish and timber so much as raw materials, but rather as value added products. This is pro-

ducing more wealth for more businesses, creating lots of good jobs, and supporting the sustainable management of our fisheries and forests.



## **Integrated Agriculture**

Once we grasped that the multi million dollar food industry on the coast was nearly entirely an “import product - export money” type of business, change really began. A lot of the food we eat now is grown locally, and the percentage increases every year. A wide range of processed speciality foods are exported. School, senior and hospital food services buy and serve local food, as do many coast restaurants. The integration of the retail, distribution, growing, and processing components of the local food network has created wealth and a high level of services and products for everyone.

Local food production invigorated the already thriving restaurant, wine and food scene which delighted locals and created a significant draw to visitors.



## **Old Mill Site – New Opportunity**

While the original task of guiding the redevelopment of the mill site seemed daunting at the beginning, it mostly turned out to be a pretty common sense approach to tending the health of the whole town, including a bunch of new land on the ocean edge. We have a great park along the sea, linking many miles of coastal trails and access. The retail expansion within the mill site increased the capacity of downtown attracting and serving both tourists and locals and still maintained the flavor of a small seaside town. The larger growth projects have included educational, cultural, art, performance and convention facilities. Lovely, state of the art, diversified housing of many types is scattered throughout the “new part of town”, maintaining a delightful feeling of a small seaside community. The old surrounded and included the new, and the new emerged from and honored the traditions and values of the old.

# Culture

## **A Culture of Engagement**

Community here on the coast now means shared responsibility for food, shelter, transportation, health care, and education - and achieving that goal has brought increasing and sustainable prosperity. Renewing and rebuilding our community over the past twenty years has engaged many more of us in civic projects - our new favorite recreation. Everybody helps design, build, create, and then celebrate our collective success all the time. There are ample, diverse opportunities for all kinds of relationships and organizations, a profound respect for diversity, and a high sensitivity to the right to be left alone.

## **Community Based Learning**

The local schools have transformed into a network that uses the coast wireless broadband network to link information providers and information consumers of all ages. An integrated transportation system system gets everyone around. The central school facilities are linked with community based programs, internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job learning and tutorials as well as to teachers, equipment and workshops everywhere. Quite a number of educational and training enterprises have started up - including several large public and private ones. This learning network attracts short and long



term visitors every year who come to study and learn in our community. Our still thriving visitor economy increasingly attracts guests who come and stay to learn, to experience our extraordinary community first hand, as well as to play.

After we took an inventory of the skills and knowledge held in our north coast “brain trust”, we invited everyone to make their abilities available to others. Suddenly we had hundreds of highly motivated teachers, who could use the network and transportation system to connect with equally motivated students. We turned the whole community into one big school - and we all seem to be getting smarter every day. While local schools still provide the core of basic instruction to children, they have greatly expanded the role of professional educators, who now function as consultants to us all.

### **A New Health Vision**

Putting way more focus on sustaining and creating health than on treating disease, worked to transform health care on the coast. A variety of health oriented agencies and organizations directed a massive health education project, and we all learned how to increase basic healthiness and to respond to minor injuries and health issues at home and with our neighbors. While the cost of disease treatment continues to rise nationally, coastal residents spend on staying healthy, and treating their everyday minor medical needs at the lowest and most economically appropriate level. We also collectively support a state of the art, small hospital/treatment facility, staffed by excellent physicians and technicians who value our coastal way of life.



## **Realizing Our Traditional Values**

Our economic renewal created prosperity, opportunity, and diversity. The wealthier of us reinvested in the local business community, which helped more of us earn a good living. We really got it that true wealth means that every person has a opportunity to do good work, earn a comfortable living, and lead prosperous, long healthy lives. Our increasing diversity made our culture richer and deeper, and give us more to appreciate about one another. We learned each other's languages. We maintained strong individualistic and group identities, but at the same time became deeply invested in our integrated coastal community. Our children stayed, and made new families - because they could - and we again became a truly intergenerational community.

