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Santa Clarita Launches Economic Development Plan

The Santa Clarita City Council recently approved a 21-Point Business Plan for Progress, which calls for investing more than \$5.1 million in new programs and incentives to boost the local economy.

Although Santa Clarita has fared considerably better than other communities in Los Angeles County, its fourth quarter 2008 sales tax numbers were 15% below same quarter comparisons for 2007 and among the lowest in the city's 21-year history.

Santa Clarita's office, retail and industrial vacancy rate was 6.8 percent in January of 2009, and unemployment was at 6.6 percent compared to 10.8 percent in Los Angeles County.

The 21-point plan approved by the Council on Tuesday, calls for use of both general fund dollars and federal stimulus monies to enhance local business partnerships, encourage job creation, and develop marketing programs to bolster retail spending and attract external dollars to the community, among other things. The plan calls for partnerships between the City, Chamber of Commerce, College of the Canyons, Valley Industrial Association and other organizations.

It includes a first-ever film incentive program that provides subsidized permit fees and a rebate program for locally based productions. It also allocates \$250,000 for a "Think Santa Clarita Valley" Shop Local campaign to promote the area's retail, dining and professional services.

As part of the 21-point plan, the city will also invest \$50,000 to broaden marketing efforts for the City's Enterprise Zone program. To date, less than 5 percent of eligible businesses have taken advantage of the hiring credits available through the Enterprise Zone.

Santa Clarita will also create a development one-stop at City Hall, helping to streamline the permit process and expedite business permitting needs by introducing new technology, and allowing business owners to submit their plans and receive permits online.

The 21-point plan also calls for further review and consideration of a hotel business improvement district (BID), which could potentially generate hundreds of thousands of dollars to support tourism attraction to the Santa Clarita Valley.

The City of Santa Clarita already works closely with tourism partners like Six Flags California, Westfield Valencia Town Center, and local hotels and tourism-minded businesses to market the area and support regional and national tourism, which contributes more than \$10 million annually to the local economy.

Other aspects of the plan include: maximizing federal stimulus dollars for infrastructure projects that benefit the community; directing federal dollars towards Neighborhood Stabilization Programs that proactively address local vacant and foreclosed homes; improving the WorkSource Center; increasing the City's incentive to purchase locally from 5 percent to 10 percent; and working with local public and private partners to create an Economic Development Corporation for Santa Clarita.

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