

## County launches Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative

By Eve Mitchell Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times

Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

The waterfront from Hercules to Oakley would become even more of a working waterfront under an economic development proposal being touted by Supervisor Federal Glover.

The Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative calls for stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for the Board of Supervisors to adopt by year's end. Once a plan is in place, an interagency group will work to improve maritime and land-based resources to encourage development of vacant and underused industrial lands in the absence of redevelopment programs.

Stakeholders will include local businesses, representatives from Hercules, Martinez, Concord, Pittsburg, Antioch and Oakley, special districts in the area, industry and regional associations.

"This is a great opportunity to do great things," Glover said at a town-hall meeting in Bay Point, one of four such meetings in April on the initiative.

At a February meeting, the Board of Supervisors authorized the initiative to go forward.

The 50-mile stretch of shoreline covers both unincorporated areas and cities, but excludes parks, open spaces and wetlands, which makes up about 60 percent of the waterfront area. The initiative area goes from the shoreline to a mile inland.

The area, which has deep industrial roots that stretch back more than 100 years, is home to several oil refineries, chemical manufacturing facilities, railroads, deep-water wharves and power plants.

"Contra Costa County's 'working waterfront' is more than a historic artifact, it is still a vital part of the region's economy," the report said. "However, as the working waterfront matures and the region's economy evolves, it is in the county's interest to gain a better understanding and insight about waterfront's future and strategically plan for that future."

Existing industrial and commercial lands, along with maritime and land-based transportation facilities and utilities, will be inventoried and mapped to produce an atlas of the northern waterfront. A market study will be done to assess demand for new industrial or maritime-related space.

Glover said it is too early to say how many jobs will result as a result of the initiative, but said employment will be a part of the analysis.

"This is the monster that's in the room and we are going to tackle it," he said.

Rich Seithel, chief of annexations and economic stimulus programs for Contra Costa County, said the area has a well-developed rail system that is not being used enough. The widening of Highway 4 is another plus for the initiative, he said.

Just talk of the initiative has apparently provoked interest.

"We've had three international shipping terminals talking to us about putting in terminals," in the unincorporated area of Antioch, he said.

Richmond, which operates a very active and diversified port, is not included in the initiative.

"With Richmond, we'd like to use them as a resource. They're pretty well-developed," Seithel said.

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if you're interested

The last two of four town hall meetings on the Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative will be held from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. April 24 in Crockett, Community Center 850 Pomona St., and from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. April 25 at the Rodeo Senior Center, 189 Parker Ave.