



March 28th, 2010

To: Property Owners on Main Street, from 4th to 8th Streets, in Downtown El Centro

SUBJECT: Creation of the Downtown El Centro Community Benefit District (CBD)

As a business and/or property owner in the Downtown El Centro, you have feelings about the current condition of Downtown and realize that things could be much better. We currently lack the proper critical mass and density of retail and services businesses and need to re-establish Downtown as a significant center of commerce and civic pride in the Imperial Valley, once again. *Services currently provided by the City may not be maintained in the future as the economic slowdown and declining tax revenues result in reduced services.* The differences today, as compared to when Downtown was in its heyday, are issues regarding branding, the critical mass of retail and land use, particularly in the future and the potential for residential growth in Downtown.

As many of you may recall, in November 2007 the El Centro Redevelopment Agency approved a downtown revitalization plan known as Project SHAPE which addressed land uses and introduced the mixed-use concept within the downtown area.

Over the past five years, the Downtown El Centro Business Improvement District (BID) has made a strong, consistent effort to improve conditions in Downtown. Its skeletal budget of approximately \$30,000 per year has allowed it to:

- Sponsor occasional special events to highlight Downtown, such as Ice Cream Social, Farmer's Markets, Mardi Gras Parade, etc.
- Layout and plan holiday decorations;
- Advertise downtown services available through local media sources, such as newspaper, radio, downtown website, and television
- Weekly sidewalk clean up and graffiti removal along the BID area

This effort has been consistent, but even the leadership of the BID realizes that its resources are not adequate to take Downtown to the next level.

Imperial Avenue has captured much of the retail business that should be on Main Street; however Main Street is in transition. As the civic center of the Imperial Valley, Main Street is increasingly anchored by County and City employees, office and



2130 Columbia Street ■ San Diego, CA 92101 ■ 888-356-2726 ■ 619-233-5009 ■ Fax 619-239-7105
mail@newcityamerica.com ■ www.newcityamerica.com

professional workers and service related businesses. Many of these businesses have come to realize that Main Street is one of the only walkable sections of the entire valley. And though it may get hot in the summer, it is never too hot to go for a stroll under the historic arcades. In addition, Palm Springs is no cooler than El Centro and its temperature has not stopped it from becoming a great destination spot year round.

Therefore, this Downtown is not what it used to be, and may never be so again. As new offices and professionals move back Downtown, this urban population will create the critical mass to feed new retail. When the new El Centro Regional Medical Center outpatient clinic opens at the corner of 4th and Main Street, this will just increase the service sector related business daytime population and serve as an impetus to new growth.

As part of this process of understanding where Downtown is headed, the El Centro Redevelopment Agency has retained a downtown revitalization firm, New City America, to work with business and property owners on ideas on how to expedite improvements in Downtown. We have seen the changes in Gaslamp and Little Italy in Downtown San Diego and Palm Springs over the last few years and know that our community has the same great potential for attracting new service and retail businesses, residents and visitors from both sides of the border alike.

Over the past few years, the business and property owners in other Southern California communities have supported the revitalization of their respective districts by embracing a financing tool known as a *Community Benefit District* (CBD). These new CBD assessment districts are the next phase above traditional BIDs and have given businesses and business district property owners the tools they need to greatly improve commerce and the image of their respective business districts.

The property owners of Downtown El Centro are being surveyed to see how they respond to the concept of funding special benefit services over and above what the City is currently providing. Many have seen a decline in business and shuttered buildings, but this is mainly occurring because Downtown lacks an identity or brand. The only way to reverse this general decline of popularity is for the property owners to work in conjunction with the business owners, City and Redevelopment Agency to plan for a fresh start.

If approved by the property owners, this proposed Downtown El Centro CBD would be funded through an assessment levied on each and every parcel in the finalized and approved boundaries of the district. Affected property owners will determine the exact costs of funding these special benefit services. All properties, public and private, commercial, residential and non-profit would be included in this new assessment district and will be required to participate financially upon approval.

The first step in this process is to ascertain whether there exists “conceptual support” for the creation of this new CBD for Downtown El Centro. We ask that you take a moment to fill out the attached property owner survey and fax it back to us by Friday, April 16th. Please fax all completed surveys directly to the New City America office at (619) 239-7105. Alternatively, you may mail the completed survey back in the self-addressed

envelope enclosed. The survey results will be summarized and mailed by the middle of May. Please call the New City America office at (888) 356-2726 should you have any questions regarding the survey or the creation of the proposed Downtown El Centro CBD.

Sincerely,

The Downtown El Centro Community Benefit District Steering Committee

**SURVEY OF DOWNTOWN EL CENTRO
PROPERTY OWNERS PURSUANT TO THE INVESTIGATION OF
A DOWNTOWN EL CENTRO COMMUNITY BENEFIT DISTRICT**

(Please respond by fax or mail by Friday, April 16th)

*You may also download copies of this survey online by going to:
www.newcityamerica.com and click on "New Districts/Surveys"*

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. How long have you owned your property at this address in the Downtown El Centro? (see attached preliminary boundary map)
 - a. Less than 2 years
 - b. 3 - 9 years
 - c. 10 - 24 years
 - d. 25 - 49 years
 - e. 50 or more years

2. In terms of business type, is your property occupied by.....
 - a. Retail use
 - b. Office use
 - c. Professional use
 - d. Civic uses
 - e. Non-profit
 - f. I have no tenants
 - g. Would prefer not to disclose

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED

3. In terms of security and public safety, do you feel that the Downtown El Centro is.....?
 - a. Safe and orderly
 - b. Unsafe;
 - c. Safe, however suffers an image as an unsafe district

4. Would you support *property owner funded* special benefit services, which would prioritize dealing with those people acting in a disorderly manner in Downtown?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No Opinion

BEAUTIFICATION AND CLEANLINESS

5. Would you support the initiation of *property owner funded* regular sidewalk and gutter sweeping services?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No Opinion

6. Would you support *property owner funded* regular planting, trimming and maintenance of trees, and shrubs throughout the Downtown El Centro to beautify the community?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No Opinion

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING THE DISTRICT

7. Would you support *property owner funded* planning and economic development related services to give input to proposed land use and zoning changes that would impact the district?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No Opinion

8. Do you believe that best way to increase new business development, particularly service and office business attraction to Main Street, would be through coming up with adequate parking for these new employees?
 a. Yes b. No c. No Opinion

9. Would you support *property owner funded* special events to improve the identity of Downtown El Centro as well as bring positive attention to the district?
 a. Yes b. No c. No Opinion

10. Would you support *property owners funded* programs that aggressively seek new businesses for Downtown?
 a. Yes b. No c. No Opinion

11. Would you be interested in serving on the Downtown El Centro Community Benefit District Steering Committee as we possibly develop the plan over the next few months?
 a. Yes b. No c. No Opinion

Please fill out the following information:

Property Owner Name: _____

Authorized Representative's Name: _____

Property Site Address(es): _____

Mailing Address: City/State/Zip: _____

Phone/Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

Please return the completed survey in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.
 Survey results can also be faxed to:
 NEW CITY AMERICA INC., at (619) 239-7105

Please respond by Friday, April 16th

New City America Inc.
 Marco Li Mandri, Downtown El Centro CBD Project Manager

2130 Columbia Street
San Diego, CA 92101 (888) 356-2726
marco@newcityamerica.com