

Jim DellaLonga Creates Impact by Assisting with the Development of SteelCraft Bellflower

Decade-2010-2019

Why did you get involved in economic development?

I sort of fell into a career in municipal redevelopment & economic development. An internship in the City of Cypress Community Development Department in the early 1990s eventually turned into an entry level position in the Cypress Redevelopment Agency where economic development was a huge part of what I did on a daily basis. It's a dynamic field that seems to bring new challenges daily with every program and project. I haven't looked back since.

Bellflower
Economic Development

Describe the project/program that you were a lead on (list multiple phases if any)

My first major project as Director of Economic Development for the City of Bellflower is SteelCraft Bellflower, an outdoor food court made up of recycled shipping containers in the heart of Downtown Bellflower. Before SteelCraft was even in the picture, this project involved the acquisition of the property from the Successor Agency. The project included getting the developer to buy-off on the potential of Downtown Bellflower, negotiating the lease with option to purchase, facilitating the entitlements, and helping out where needed to get the project over the finish line.

What was challenging and/or rewarding working on this project/program?



Older, smaller downtowns are often difficult to rejuvenate due to the obsolete buildings, odd building and lot sizes, and the aged and undersized utility hookups of these structures. This vacant lot presented a great opportunity to create and build a modern concept in a more traditional downtown. Little did we know we were going to get an extremely modern and edgy concept with SteelCraft. The excitement

surrounding the project has been tremendous and the recent success of a number of businesses in the downtown has created a strain on the parking facilities adjacent to the SteelCraft site. Preparing for the anticipated influx of guests to the downtown has been challenging. From banners and wayfinding signs for various nearby City lots, to a public parking valet on weekend nights, to a future downtown parking structure (anticipated completion in



early 2020), as SteelCraft opens its doors, we will see if our efforts will end up reducing the strain. The most rewarding part of working on this project is hearing the citizens of Bellflower express their excitement for the project and seeing the excitement build through the stages of the development. After all, we are working for the citizens of our respective cities or regions and it doesn't get much more rewarding than having the people of the

community in which we serve excited and thankful for helping to bring such a project to their hometown.

Briefly explain the impact the project/program has had or will have on employment, expansion of local tax base & diversification of the area's economy?

Besides reactivating a long-time vacant lot in the heart of Downtown Bellflower, this project is, at its core, an entrepreneurial restaurant incubator generating 30 - 40 jobs and new sales tax. It is as close to a transformational project for an area that you can get and is expected to be a regional destination in southeast Los Angeles County that will introduce many people to the charm, shops and other food options in the Downtown Bellflower.

What advice would you give to other economic development professionals when working on a similar project/program?

Although it is difficult for many reasons and not always possible especially in the post-redevelopment era, site control is key. When the City owns a development site and becomes a supportive partner in a development, one layer of uncertainty is removed from the project for the developer. Sure, there'll be other hurdles throughout the process, but clearing this initial hurdle can often get a project out of the starting gates with positive momentum to make it to the finish line.

Please list any social media usernames and website addresses so that other members can connect with you.

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