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NEW VALLEJO TEAM ADVANCING COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

VALLEJO, CA – With the hiring of two key staff in the last month, the City of Vallejo is expanding its ability to plan for, attract, and approve new development. On May 5, Lonell Butler joined the team taking on the role of Chief Building Official. In April, Kathleen Diohep assumed the role of Economic Development Division Manager. Together with Mark Sawicki, Community and Economic Development Director, who began in October 2013, and Andrea Ouse, Planning Manager, who began in December 2012, they form the management team of the City’s Economic Development Department. **The Department promotes quality development and investment in the community, and facilitates the development review and inspection process to meet Vallejo’s community goals.**

“Lonell and Kathleen are joining Vallejo’s team at a pivotal time – developer interest has increased and several major projects and opportunity sites are gaining traction including North Mare Island, the Waterfront, and the 50-acre “Cooke” parcel off I-80 near Northgate,” Mark Sawicki explained. **“Internally we are gearing up to capitalize on economic opportunities and improve our systems and capacity to deliver high quality, timely services to the development community.”**

Vallejo’s economy has seen significant recent improvement. Since the low of FY 2009/10, hotel tax revenue is up by 21 percent and retail sales have also rebounded with a 21 percent increase. In addition, the City is proposing its first structurally balanced budget for FY 2014/15 since FY 2003/04.

“We are proud of the gains Vallejo has seen in recent years, but there remain tremendous opportunities for new business growth, as well as new development to enhance our beautiful downtown and waterfront,” said City Manager Daniel E. Keen. “During a priority goal setting workshop, the City Council named economic development as a top priority. As a City making its comeback, we are looking to capitalize on the regional economic recovery, laying the groundwork for the City’s long-term economic vitality.”

Lonell Butler, the new Chief Building Official, has over 28 years of experience in the public sector, most recently serving as the Director of the Building and Safety Department in the City of Compton. Prior to that, he served as the Chief Building Official for Yolo County for 8 years and as a Senior Building

Inspector for the Contra Costa County Building Department. Mr. Butler is an International Code Council Certified Building Official, Plans Examiner, Combination Inspector, and a Certified Access Specialist (CASP) from the California Division of State Architect. He has extensive experience in land development and construction, including an extensive knowledge of the building codes, disabled access, floodplain management and emerging trends in construction technology and “green”/sustainable development practices. Mr. Sawicki stated “Lonell stood out in our selection process for demonstrating a strong customer service ethic, a dedication to performance improvement, and for using technology to improve the permit process.” Lonell is a Bay Area native; he grew up in Richmond, lived in Vallejo, and now resides with his family in Vacaville.

Kathleen Diohep, the new Economic Development Manager, comes to Vallejo from the Port of San Francisco, where she served as senior project manager for public/private partnerships to redeploy underutilized land and buildings. She led an inter-disciplinary team that secured two developers to advance the Port's plan for Pier 70, a 65-acre former Bethlehem Steel Shipyard that was planned for new parks, historic rehabilitation and new buildings, while sustaining the ship repair industry. Ms. Diohep has 20 years of experience in management and analysis of public/private real estate projects in the San Francisco Bay Area. She first joined the City of San Francisco in 2004 with the Recreation and Parks Department before transferring to the Port in 2006. Prior to that, she was the ArtHouse Program Manager for California Lawyers for the Arts, assisting artists and arts organizations in securing facilities. She was one of the first 10 staff members at the Presidio Trust, where she directed the financial forecasts required to show the Trust could become self-funding. Sawicki noted, “Kathleen brought experiences with direct parallels to Vallejo – work on waterfronts, with artists, and with the maritime industry – which could spur reuse of Mare Island, the waterfront and downtown.”

Andrea Ouse, the Planning Division Manager, earlier this year initiated a community planning process to update the City's General Plan, which will guide land use decisions throughout the city, including a special focus on the Sonoma Boulevard corridor. These plans will be implemented through a new zoning code, providing more certainty and direction for new development and building improvements. The Planning Division also recently hired Mark Hoffheimer, an experienced land use planner, to lead these efforts.

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