

# North County cities form economic partnership

By [Edward Sifuentes](#) [\(/staff/edward-sifuentes/\)](#) 2:26 p.m. June 18, 2014

CARLSBAD — Five North County cities that are partnering to bring more businesses to the region are poised to ink a deal with the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation to help promote the area.

The cities are set to launch a branding campaign that aims to attract new businesses by highlighting North County's strengths as a region and will include a variety of marketing efforts that a consultant is set to unveil later this month.

The San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation will be charged with carrying out the recommendations set in the consultant's report, officials said.

Each of the cities – including Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos and Vista – is expected to pay \$46,000 for the two-year contract with the Economic Development Corporation.

Carlsbad Mayor Matt Hall said the effort, which started about two years ago, is already working. The Carlsbad City Council unanimously voted on Tuesday to approve the agreement.

“The buzz has already started,” Hall said. “When you take the five cities and put them out to market to industry it really positions us differently.”

Vista unanimously approved the agreement earlier this month, said Andrea McCullough, a spokeswoman for the city. Escondido approved it on Wednesday. Oceanside is expected to vote on it on June 25 and San Marcos will follow early next month.

Under the terms of the agreement, the EDC will coordinate the branding campaign and an economic development strategy. It will also assist the cities retain and recruit businesses. The EDC is a nonprofit that promotes regional economic growth and helps businesses with expansion plans.

Last year, the cities hired North Star Destination Strategies Inc., a Tennessee-based firm to develop the branding strategy. That company is expected to release the results of its research late this month.

“We're trying to create an identity for North County that this is a good place to do business,” said Christina Vincent, Carlsbad's economic development manager.

Earlier this year, the cities signed a memorandum of understanding to help govern and coordinate their partnership. The agreement encourages cooperation and discourages competition among the cities, which are linked by state Route 78.

The idea is to attract businesses and guide them to the city that best fits the needs of any particular company, city officials said.

“We think regionally first and we're not going to put any city ahead of another,” Vincent said.

One example of the cities already working together is Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap, a thriving company that was set to leave its longtime headquarters in Escondido for a 130,000-square-foot facility in Vista, officials said.

When the company approached Vista about the possibility of moving in 2012, Vista officials called Escondido so the two cities could work together to make sure it didn't leave North County. The efforts worked and the company moved to Vista.

“It's already paid huge dividends and I think in the years to come it's just going to get better,” Mayor Hall said.

© Copyright 2015 The San Diego Union-Tribune, LLC. An MLIM LLC Company. All rights reserved.