



ECONOMIC VITALITY COMMITTEE REPORT

March 17, 2022
Economic Development

TITLE: BUSINESS NEEDS/RECOVERY SURVEY DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND

In 2013, the City Council adopted the current Economic Development Strategic Plan which the Economic Vitality Committee uses as the foundation for its work. The plan comprises 3 focus areas:

- Priority Area A: Business Development and Communication
- Priority Area B: Built Environment and Workforce
- Priority Area C: Economic Health and Resilience

Priority Area A: Business Development and Communication is intended to conduct business development activities with particular focus on businesses that drive innovation in their sectors, and to expand communications, outreach, and technical assistance program to retain and expand existing firms. There are several action items in this priority area relating to this discussion, including:

A3. Solicit ongoing feedback from innovation-focused businesses in targeted high-technology industries.

City staff will proactively solicit input from businesses in targeted industry sectors regarding how Pleasanton can better meet the unique needs of their industries. Ongoing communications will ensure Pleasanton is viewed as a receptive, productive environment for innovative companies. The outreach may include site visits, and regularly scheduled gatherings and events for business leaders within the target industries.

A7. Solicit ongoing feedback from businesses in Pleasanton, in collaboration with the Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce.

City staff will continue to gather feedback from businesses regarding concerns and need for improvements. This data can be collected via tools such as the regular business survey and various business leader roundtable discussions. As necessary, the City will collaborate with the Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce to effectively gather this feedback. The business satisfaction survey and other feedback techniques should also assess workforce access issues.

DISCUSSION

As part of the Coordinated Business Support Program framework under the Business Engagement pillar, a Business Needs Survey was conducted in 2012 for gather baseline data, and again in 2015. In continuing efforts to better understand the current needs of the business community, particularly as they continue to navigate through the pandemic, the

EVC discussed a plan to conduct a business needs and recovery survey at its October 21, 2021, meeting at which time, FM3 Research staff led a discussion about the survey process, survey categories, and questions, including a focus on COVID-19 recovery.

Based on feedback received from the EVC, City staff worked with FM3 Research staff to refine the survey instrument, provided as Attachment 1, particularly to ensure the survey methodologies would deliver statistically valid results. The survey sample was obtained using data from the City's business license database which included email addresses and phone numbers; to provide a representative sample, key information such as zip code, number of employees, and business category was used to set quotas. The surveying took place between January 18 – February 18, 2022.

The following are key highlights:

- **43%** say Pleasanton is an **excellent place to do businesses**, and another **41%** say it's **good**.
- They rate the location **excellent or good** most broadly for **attracting and access customers** – there is slightly more ambivalence for attracting and retaining employees.
- The amount of affordable housing is a key challenge.
- **61%** rate the City's **communication** during the pandemic **excellent or good**, and **47%** rate the **services provided** during the pandemic **excellent or good**.
- **40%** say their **business is doing worse** than before the pandemic began – but **41% of those** who plan to **stay in Pleasanton** believe they'll have **more revenue in about 2 years**.
- Flexibility in work hours, WFH, contactless services and decreased hours of operation were the most common responses to the pandemic.
- 25% paused all services completely at some point.
- PPP loans were the most accessed aid to address the impacts of COVID
- **Very high** satisfaction ratings for the **permit process** and **getting information** from the city, and **57% called it "easy."** Most prefer **online** among those with a preference for online vs. in person.

Curt Below, FM3 Research Partner & Chief Operating Officer will provide an overview of the survey results. An executive summary memo will be prepared as well as a formal report after the initial results are finalized, which staff will share with the City Council and EVC.

The EVC is asked to receive the overview of the survey results and invited to ask questions to help better understand the results. The survey results will inform and assist City staff in determining priorities in the Economic Development Work Plan as well as the next City Council Two-Year Work Plan. The results will also help to inform the projected Economic Development Strategic Plan update in the coming fiscal year.

ACTIONS: RECEIVE BUSINESS NEEDS/RECOVERY SURVEY RESULTS OVERVIEW

Attachment 1 – Business Needs/Recovery Survey Instrument