

ECONOMIC VITALITY COMMITTEE REPORT

February 18, 2021
Economic Development

TITLE: DISCUSSION REGARDING BUSINESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES IN 2021

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

As noted for **Priority Area A: Business Development and Communication**, the goal is 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.

For **Priority Area B: Built Environment and Workforce**, the goal is to enhance Pleasanton's position as a desirable place to do business by encouraging the evolution of aging employment centers to better respond to changing demand, through a combination of strategies that address land use and zoning changes, multimodal access improvements, and data infrastructure needs.

Lastly, for **Priority Area C: Economic Health and Resilience**, the goal is to sustain Pleasanton's economic health and long-term resilience, so that it can continue to provide high-quality public services and amenities.

As identified in the strategic plan there are several actions related to providing business assistance, including ongoing outreach and coordination on issues like property leasing, development, and municipal services; conducting site visits, and regularly scheduled gatherings and events for business leaders; soliciting feedback from businesses regarding concerns and need for improvements via tools such as the regular business survey and various business leader roundtable discussions; communicating the attributes of Pleasanton as a business location; developing a communication program to outreach to Pleasanton businesses; and educating residents of Pleasanton regarding the contributions of businesses to the overall quality of life.

At its January 21 discussion regarding priority projects for the City Council Work Plan, the EVC recommended to retain the development of a coordinated business support program among its recommendations. As described, the program includes key strategies such as a

'shop local' campaign, Doing Business with the City program, and local purchasing practices. Some of these strategies have been implemented or still in progress.

DISCUSSION

Framework

The EVC has had previous discussions related to business assistance with the development of a coordinated business support program. A framework was introduced to address the strategic plan actions noted above. Economic Development staff has identified five key pillars that compose the City's business support program. For each pillar, primary activities that are already in place, or could be implemented, are noted:

Business Support - Ombudsman services, local purchasing practices, business support network

Business Engagement – Innovation Tri-Valley (ITV) 2040 Vision, business needs survey, *Doing Business with the City* guide and workshop, "How Do I...?" video series, business e-newsletter, business visits

Business Promotion - business events (e.g., Beyond the Cloud, #GameChangers, etc.), economic assets report update, life sciences summit and infographic/map, business highlight video, business anniversary recognition, inPleasanton.com

Business Assistance – business assistance brochure update, business support fund loan program, online zoning portal, permitting programs, financing and parking allowance, Commendable Commutes

Resident Awareness – gift card program, downtown light pole flag update, Support local campaigns and videos, social media

A visual framework for the business support program, illustrated on Attachment 1, provides the programs and activities that are currently in the Economic Development work plan.

Ideas for future consideration by the EVC

Upon adoption of the Council Work Plan, Economic Development staff will begin to budget for, schedule and implement activities that provide the most benefit and value to local businesses and the Pleasanton community broadly, taking into consideration that staff and financial resources are extremely limited.

The EVC was asked to provide input on additional ideas, programs, and initiatives for discussion. Submissions have been categorized and assigned to one of the five pillars of the framework, summarized as Attachment 2. The submissions are broadly categorized as follows:

Business Support

Ombudsman
Dedicate a city planning official to assist small business owners with their projects.

Business Engagement

Business Webinars
Small Business / City monthly Zoom meeting - assist in getting back and keeping going
A business-hosted monthly Zoom meeting to allow the residents input / questions of key business leaders / managers in Pleasanton businesses - outreach / communicate / connect

Business Promotion

Marketing & Promotion
Phased Tri-Valley Local Recovery Marketing Campaign (all 5 cities, one voice, to the residents, 2-4 months, local loyalty pledge) through Visit Tri-Valley marketing agency (proposal pending)
Top Down Deals: Hire people to drive convertibles or old cars (top down) around town with people holding large signs with special offers for restaurants and businesses. It's a twist on the town crier of olden days. It would be promoted through advertising, websites, social media.
Local restaurant swap. Local restaurants in each community will pick select dates to offer their specials to other communities. Pleasanton restaurants offer specials to Dublin Community; Dublin restaurants to Livermore; Livermore to San Ramon. It would be promoted through advertising, websites, social media. It encourages a tri-valley spirit.
Continue looking for "Outside the Box" ways to help small businesses in Pleasanton survive during the pandemic. Expand, or pivot, off of Weekends on Main, and the Business Support Fund. One thought - how can we help lead the opening of businesses and schools in Pleasanton, safely and cost effectively? Can we promote a mass vaccine site at the Fairgrounds?
I think a city funded demographic survey would aid in these efforts for future marketing to attract life science companies.

Business Assistance

Business Support Fund Loan Program Enhancements
Extend Pleasanton Business Grant/Loan Program (1st & 2nd round w/ more funds: http://www.cityofpleasantonca.gov/gov/depts/ed/covid_19_business_support/pleasanton_business_assistance_program.asp)
Continued on-going support to the Business Support Fund. Potentially increase the loan amounts and/or make businesses eligible for a second loan.

City Processes
Small Business Start-Up Kit - complete process and flow chart / fees included for initial set-up
We need a concerted effort that aligns the interests of landlords and tenants; we also should explore expanding "active use" to limit certain types of businesses so that we do not get overloaded with any single type (e.g., hair salons, frozen yogurt shops, Italian restaurants).
Uniform Design Standards / Permitting for outdoor facility use (when applicable) and 'quick glance' type handout or forms on what they may need to do to get City approvals for things that may be possible to 'fast track'
Take a look at adding TEMPORARY parking limits (30 min / 15 min) parking to allow better pick up your 'take out' dining options between tents
Stoneridge Mall Development – Pleasanton should take an active role in the planning process for this important retail/commercial/transportation zone in the Tri-Valley. Besides adding apartments and affordable housing, we should look for ways to develop a 21st century “village square” in or around Stoneridge. This should be a destination – for dinner, a concert, or skating with the family. At a minimum, Pleasanton should look for ways to streamline development in the area.

Infrastructure / Resource Planning
Infrastructure/Resource Planning – long term, it is essential that we manage our resources and infrastructure in a cost effective and green manner. This will entice businesses to move to Pleasanton, and help those businesses already here keep their fixed costs down. We must plan for changes driven by the environment, and our finite resources – and actively manage our electricity, water and waste disposal in the region. To start, we must stay involved in the potable water reuse research that is being done with the Tri-Valley Water Liaison Committee. Given the wealth in this community, NOT choosing to support this research with \$250,000, after it was approved in 2019, is embarrassing. We must use science to help us find solutions to managing our most precious resources. Water problems in CA are not going away - and we should be participating (if not leading) with our Tri-Valley neighbors.

Online Connectivity / E-Commerce
Idea: Help businesses expand their online commerce capabilities
Look at what we can do to help support internet bandwidth, connectivity, and getting seniors and businesses connected (love the Chromebook check out from the Library)!

Resident Awareness

Main Street Closure / Downtown
Close Main St. on the weekends starting the weekend before school spring break thru Thanksgiving.
Explore a permanent change of Main Street to a pedestrian mall.

Downtown: stay alive and thrive - this is the "epicenter" of our community and should have top priority because it defines how we are perceived by residents much more strongly than, say, Hacienda.

Gift Card/Savings Pass Programs

Move forward with instituting a gift card program like Yiftee that covers the entire City.

City-wide savings pass program (see Stockton example here: <https://www.visitstockton.org/stockton-savings-pass/#venues>)(similar to Visit Tri-Valley Beer Trail passport: <https://visittrivalley.com/beer-trail>)

My thought is to use a similar program, but expanded across all businesses downtown. For example, spend \$100 at a restaurant and get a \$10 credit to one of the retail shops, and vice versa.

EVC Input

Feedback from the EVC on the following questions will help to guide staff in moving forward:

- Is there anything from existing programs (Attachment 1) that could be removed?
- Of the ideas suggested, what are the top three (3) that provide the greatest return to the Pleasanton business community over the coming 1-2 years?

ACTION: PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON SUGGESTED BUSINESS SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

Attachment 1 – Current Coordinated Business Support Program Framework

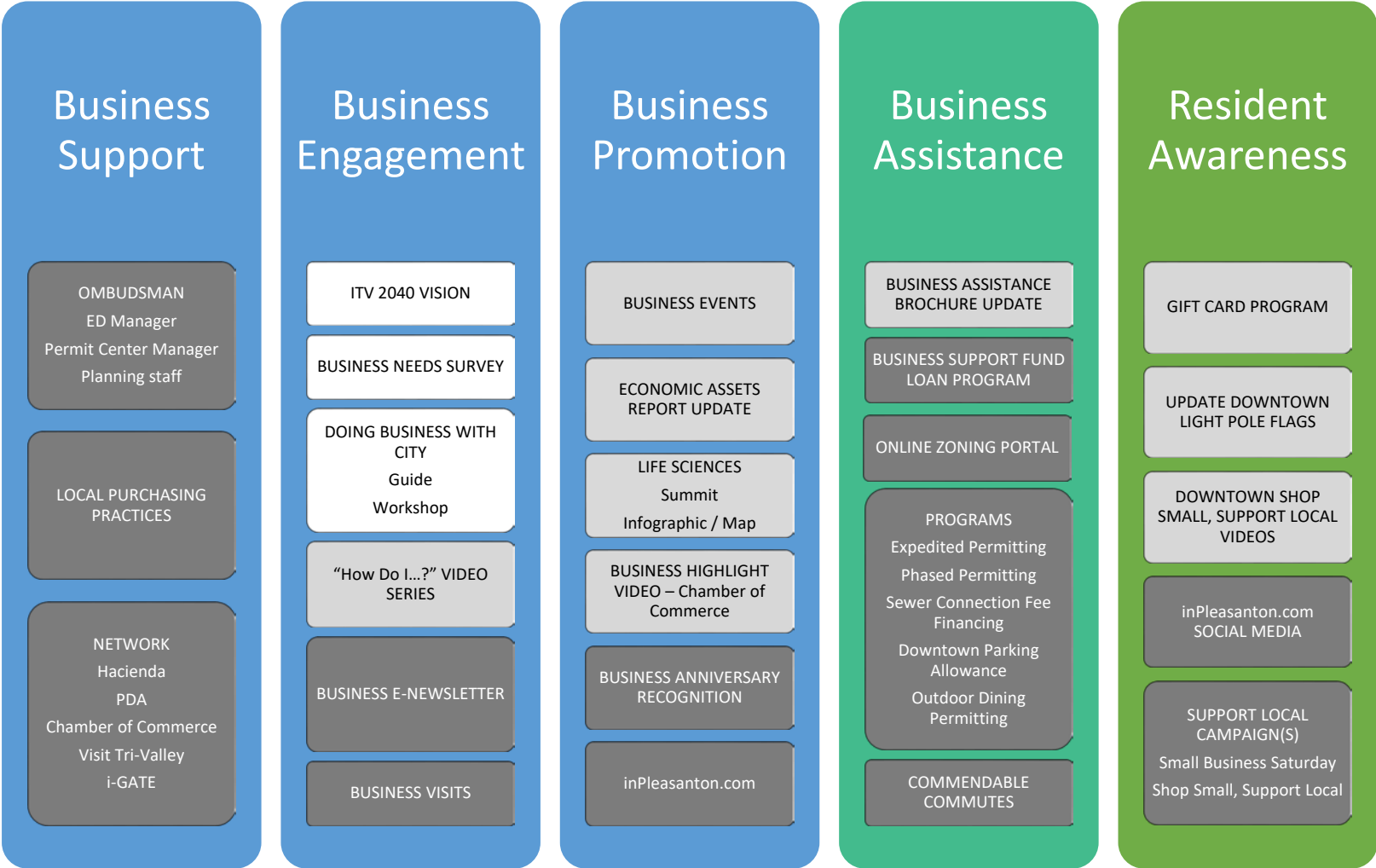
Attachment 2 – Ideas for Future Consideration by EVC Framework

Addendum

Business Promotion

Marketing & Promotion
P2P app that would encourage businesses to use each others resources. Small businesses would promote themselves on the app and could offer specials to other businesses. Most small businesses need services like printing, insurance, marketing, etc. We would need to promote the app through advertising, websites, social media.

COORDINATED BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAM

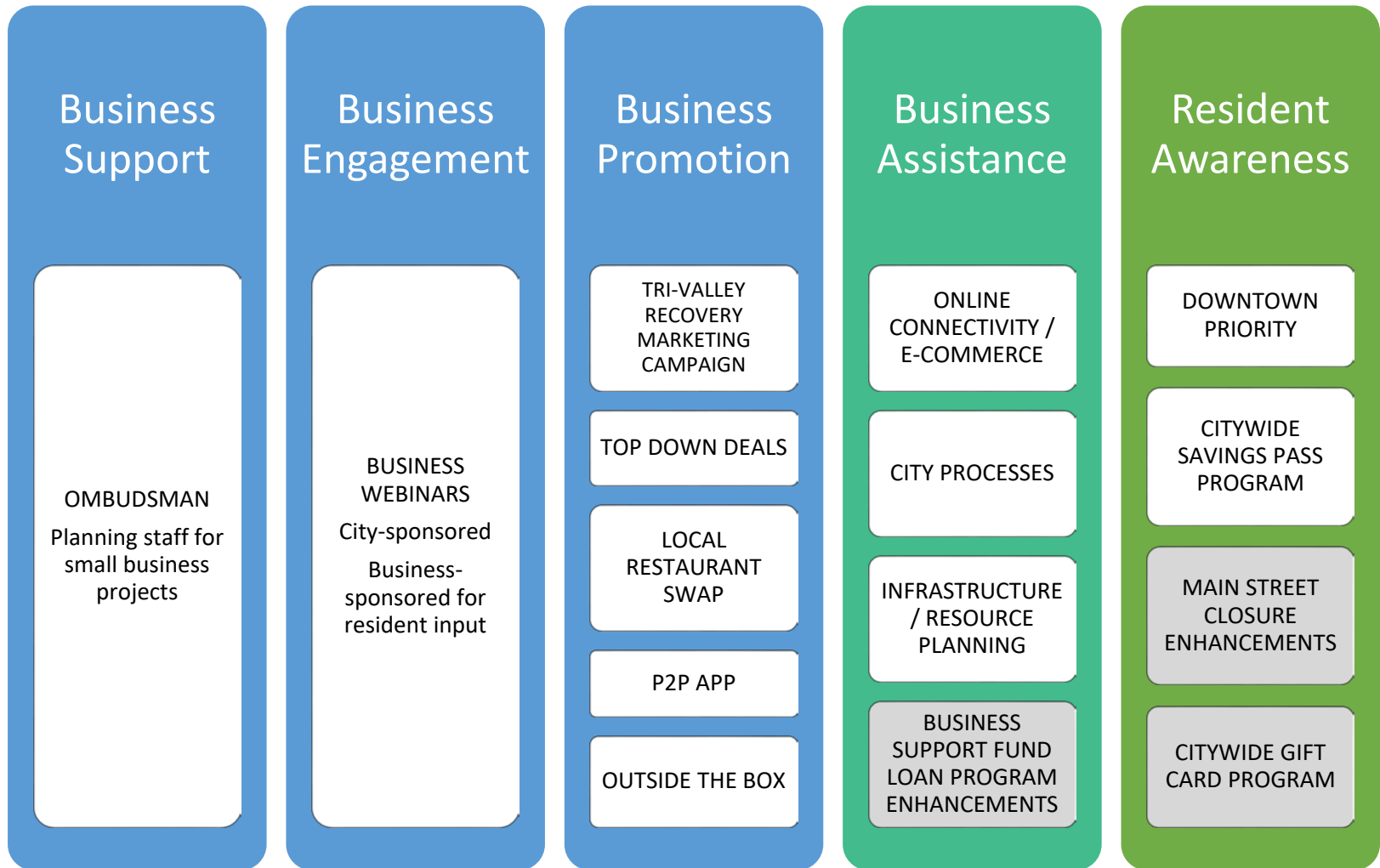


Activity in place

Activity planned

Activity to be developed

IDEAS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY EVC



Activity planned