



CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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TITLE: A ROAD TO RECOVERY FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES BLUEPRINT
ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Motion to receive and accept the Administrative Report on the “A Road to Recovery for Local Businesses Blueprint” (Blueprint). No further action is required.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council receive and accept the Administrative Report on the “A Road to Recovery for Local Businesses Blueprint” (Blueprint).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Federal policies and state and local orders put in place starting in March 2020 to slow the spread of COVID-19 have resulted in sudden and dramatic impacts to local small businesses as many have been forced to reduce operations or close their doors. The City has been proactive to help small local businesses get the assistance they need from local, state, and federal disaster relief and recovery programs. In April 2020, late Mayor Gunter appointed a Small Business Support and Economic Taskforce (Taskforce) to assist staff with developing response, relief and recovery strategies to support small businesses. This Administrative Report provides a summary of the Taskforce’s Blueprint, which is provided as an attachment to this report. The Blueprint identifies small business challenges resulting from the pandemic and associated economic downturn, highlights actions taken by the City and Taskforce partners to provide relief, and outlines recommended actions for relief, recovery and resiliency to support small business to rebound and be better prepared for navigating future disasters (natural, health, and/or economic).

BACKGROUND:

The City's small business support and COVID-19 response activities have been centered around communication/education, facilitating connection to resources, fast-tracking permit processing and navigation, and financial assistance. The formation of the Taskforce was a key component of the City's response efforts. The Taskforce is comprised of technical professionals (small business support, finance, marketing, health), representatives from business associations (ie: Salinas United Business Association and Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce), and small business owner representatives of different business types and geographical areas of the City. When the Taskforce was formed in April 2020, its objective was to identify and set priorities for immediate economic disaster relief efforts and support businesses with navigating COVID-19 pandemic health protocols and the State's "Tier System" for re-opening. In February 2021, the City Council extended the term of the Taskforce for an additional six (6) months with expanded membership and the objective of developing a strategy "play book" for City relief and recovery response to this crisis and resiliency measures to be better prepared for future disasters and economic downturns. This report provides a summary of the Taskforce's Blueprint, which is provided as an attachment to this report.

DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have devastating impacts on the economy and local small businesses. The Taskforce brought together experts and resources who identified areas of concern and leveraged resources to collaboratively execute activities to respond and provide support and relief to Salinas small businesses. The City alone did not have the capacity to provide the level of relief needed. Staff thanks the Taskforce members and partners for their commitment to small business support and their monumental efforts to provide relief. Taskforce members developed the Blueprint to document actions taken, identify existing challenges, to capture the outputs and outcomes of Taskforce activities, and to outline recommended actions for relief, recovery and resiliency to support small business.

The Blueprint includes

- A snapshot of economic impacts to Salinas and Monterey County small businesses,
- Relief actions and activities taken by the City and Taskforce partners,
- Key challenges, best practices and recommendations for relief, recovery, and resiliency; and
- Appendices including supplemental information and resources.

The Blueprint also outlines the Taskforce's five areas of focus and presents recommended actions rooted in identified best practices to address these areas of need. Recommended actions are grouped by relief, recovery and resiliency and listed in order of priority and/or opportunity. The five areas of focus are

1. Communication and Education
2. Financial Assistance
3. Permit Processing and Fees
4. Digital Literacy and Social Media Presence
5. Advance Economic Equity of Small Businesses through Policy

This Blueprint serves as a catalyst for new and ongoing dialogue and cooperation among Taskforce stakeholders to assist and strengthen small businesses, the economic pillar of the Salinas community, as they recover from the COVID-19. In addition, this Blueprint serves as a guide for effective and efficient emergency response to small businesses during a future disaster or economic downturn. This document is a living document and will be reviewed and updated annually by the Taskforce to ensure the most current best practices guide recommended actions and activities.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines section 15378).

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

This staff report and recommendations align with the following City Council strategic plan initiatives:

- Investment Strategies/ Risk Management
- Operational Efficiencies
- Public Safety

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

The Community Development Department, Advanced Planning and Project Implementation Division led the City's small business COVID-19 response activities, including Taskforce coordination, communication and education initiatives, facilitating access to capital, and permit streamlining for outdoor activity permits. The participation and partnership of Taskforce members was critical to the identification of priority needs, implementation of response activities, and the development of this Blueprint as a strategic planning document.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact to the General Fund associated with the acceptance of this Administrative Report. The Limited-Term Community Development Analyst – Business Navigator is the city liaison and coordinator of the Taskforce and led Blueprint preparation. The Business Navigator's salary is paid through Community Development Block Grant COVID-19 funds. Future implementation activities requiring budget augmentation may be presented as part of future mid-year or annual budgetary cycles and could be funded through the Economic Development Element Implementation CIP 9136.

ATTACHMENTS:

Draft A Road to Recovery for Local Businesses Blueprint