



Economic Vitality Commission
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TO: Mayor Mary Lou Pauly
City Councilmembers

FROM: Therese Garcia, Chair
Christopher Beaudoin, Vice-Chair

DATE: December 16, 2020

SUBJECT: Economic Vitality Commission Annual Report

On behalf of the Economic Vitality Commission (EVC), we submit this report as outlined by the ordinance that guides our work. Please do not hesitate to contact the Commission with questions or input.

Background:

The EVC's role is advisory to the Mayor and City Council to provide additional expertise necessary to enhance and facilitate economic vitality. This can include making recommendations on policies or participating in program level activities.

The EVC ordinance was most recently updated in the beginning of 2016. This report meets the code requirement to provide a written report to the Mayor and City Council every January on the ongoing projects under review by the Commission.

2020 Review and 2021 Plans:

Membership

As with all commissions, the EVC has not met for most of 2020 due to the temporary cancellation of commission meetings due to COVID-19. In addition, the cancellation of the recruitment process resulted in 2 vacancies that were unfilled for the year and in December another member resigned due to increased job responsibilities. Currently there are seven members of the commission, who represent health care, real estate and IT, as well as corporate, entrepreneurship, small business and Chamber representatives. In 2021, the City will recruit for 6 of the 10 positions on the EVC. This includes the 3 current vacancies, an additional vacancy due to an ending term, and two current member positions. Commissioners began to define the desired skillsets and business perspectives of new members to ensure a diverse and robust representation to support economic vitality.

2020 Efforts

The EVC met four times in 2020, coordinating with sustainable programs, creating and reviewing the Business Reinvention Grant program, supporting the 2020 City-wide Business Survey efforts, and most importantly contributing to the business recovery planning efforts. EVC Commissioners also participated in the first annual Business Leadership Forum in June.

2021 Plans

In November and December 2020, the Commission focused on the efforts necessary to support the businesses during the continued restrictions on business operations as well as recovery. This conversation will continue throughout 2021 and will evolve as the COVID-19 restrictions change. Commissioners understand the need to address the impacts for small businesses and that different industries may require different solutions.

In addition to business retention and recovery efforts, the Commission is interested in monitoring the commercial vacancies and supporting efforts to attract businesses of all sizes. In addition, the virtual workforce that is working from home presents an opportunity to strengthen connections to amenities and business services in Issaquah.

Overall, the EVC will utilize data to monitor the progress and provide input to economic development efforts. Early in 2021, the EVC will start with a thorough analysis of the 2020 Business Survey to determine strengths to build upon and gaps to fill to support businesses. The [Recovery Dashboard](#) is another tool to track commercial properties, retail sales tax, and unemployment to measure Issaquah's economy. The EVC will work with economic development staff to identify other data sources to help inform its work.

While we do not know exactly what businesses will face in 2021, the EVC is ready to help the City be the best prepared to retain and strengthen businesses and build upon the positive business climate.