



City Council Economic Development Subcommittee

MINUTES

Conference Room A
City Hall, 501 Primrose Road – Burlingame, California
Wednesday, March 13, 2019 – 8:15a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present: Vice Mayor Beach and Councilmember Ann Keighran

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Economic Development Specialist (EDS) Cleese Relihan, Community Development Director (CDD) Kevin Gardiner, City Manager Lisa Goldman (CM), Parks and Recreation Director Margaret Glomstad (PR)

Members of the Public Present: Yana Bassovith (Owner of Lacelet), Jenny Keleher (President of Burlingame Avenue DBID and Co-Owner of Runners Mind with Todd Keleher), John Kevranian (President of Broadway BID and Owner of Nuts for Candy), Dan Laguna (Co-Owner of Blue Line Pizza), Georgette Naylor (President of Chamber of Commerce)

READ AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY MEETING

The draft February Economic Development Subcommittee meeting minutes were not yet available. They will be reviewed at the April meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Review of Façade Improvement Pilot Program:

EDS Relihan introduced this item, explaining that the intent is for the Economic Development Subcommittee to provide direction on how best to present the Façade Improvement Pilot Program to the full City Council for review. He noted that review by the City Attorney is ongoing. There was some confusion as a copy of the Vacant Property Maintenance Checklist was distributed in lieu of the Façade Improvement Pilot Program; the intention was to distribute both together as a pair of complementary initiatives promoting commercial property improvement and maintenance.

Subcommittee members directed staff to write a staff report outlining that the Façade Improvement Pilot Program went through the Economic Development Subcommittee last year with a slightly different membership. The report should note who has reviewed it, and note that the subcommittee has had a change in the membership in the meantime. To avoid Brown Act issues, it is not being reviewed on the subcommittee level further. The report should note that last year the subcommittee recommended the program to the full City Council, and now the full Council is being asked to discuss whether to implement the program.

Subcommittee members had questions about the Vacant Property Maintenance Checklist, and in particular whether it was being provided to property owners. EDS Relihan clarified that the checklist

was developed last year to respond to issues of vacant storefronts not being well maintained or presented well for marketing. The document presents best practices, but because it has not been adopted as an ordinance, it does not have the weight of law. The document has been provided to all commercial property owners in the Downtown Burlingame and Broadway commercial districts in the hope that they will voluntarily follow the checklist.

Subcommittee members remarked that there continue to be instances of poor maintenance of vacant properties, and in the goal-setting session this year, there was discussion that it may need to be implemented as an ordinance to be more forceful. At this point, the question for the Economic Development Subcommittee would be whether to consider an ordinance. In the meantime, the checklist can be posted on the City's website, and further outreach can be undertaken to provide people an opportunity to comply voluntarily.

Subcommittee members noted that they had sent photos of offending properties to EDS Relihan several months ago, and inquired whether there had been follow-up after the initial outreach. Direction was given to follow up with recurring violators, with instructions that maintenance matters would be expected to be addressed in the next month. Violators should further be instructed that, if action is not taken by the offenders, the City Council is considering implementing an ordinance and the possibility of fines. Subcommittee members further clarified that, while the most egregious violators are on Burlingame Avenue, the outreach and possible subsequent regulations should apply to all commercial areas including Burlingame Plaza.

Subcommittee members directed that the item return to the subcommittee at a subsequent meeting. The concern is that the voluntary approach is not working, and that some of these buildings look bad and do not reflect well on the community. This could be a detriment to other businesses considering moving into the area.

In the meantime, subcommittee members directed EDS Relihan to take photos of offending properties when he does his rounds, and send the photos and a letter to the respective property owners. It should not be a generic cover letter; it should be addressed specifically to the property owner by name, should include a photo of the property, and describe what the property should look like properly maintained. This would be the first phase, with subsequent follow-up.

Subcommittee members requested that a progress report be presented at the next meeting. This should include who the outreach has been to, their response, and their action plan.

Shop Local Campaign:

This item was intended to be a discussion of strategies and tactics for a Burlingame Shop Local Campaign that can support local retailers and other small businesses.

Subcommittee members noted that at the last meeting, there was a presentation from a vendor (LiveShop) offering an online marketplace and delivery service for local businesses. Subcommittee members clarified that enlisting such a service is something that each individual business would decide for itself, and that the City itself does not get involved in marketing for businesses. Such an endeavor could be taken up by the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and the Chamber of Commerce. John Kevranian, President of the Broadway BID, noted that they have approached the Chamber, and once

the Chamber has seen the presentation and provided it supports the endeavor, presentations will be made to each of the BIDs.

Subcommittee members clarified that while the City cannot promote a particular vendor, it can support a Shop Local campaign more generally. It does not necessarily mean that the City endorses any particular software or vendor, but the City can offer publicity and branding, and help raise the consciousness in the community for shopping local. The City can contribute resources such as graphic designers, and can include items in its newsletters, done in a manner where it is not giving any advantage to any one particular vendor but just advertising the overall concept of shopping locally.

Members of the public in attendance had a range of opinions on the matter, including:

- There was some skepticism that a Shop Local campaign would be effective if it is too broad or global.
- The LiveShop vendor could be implemented on a pilot program basis. The vendor could work with the local merchants to move the program forward.

Subcommittee members emphasized that the City is looking at a Shop Local initiative to tell the community how important it is to shop in the community, rather than online or in other communities. For example, when Books Inc. closed, people were disappointed. However, talking to local residents confirmed that they were more typically purchasing books online rather than purchasing from the local business. As people complain about small businesses leaving, emphasis needs to be made to support the local businesses.

Subcommittee members noted that furthermore, 70% of the revenue from small business stays in the community, including a portion allocated to the City to support the services it provides the community. There could be a marketing campaign, with a new logo on items such as water bottles, and promotion through the newsletter.

Comments from members of public in attendance:

- It would be effective. The City has a lot of resources, such as the e-blast and the Parks and Recreation brochure. It has to be a joint effort with the BIDs, the community members, parents, and the schools or else it's not going to work out.
- It would be more effective than individual businesses trying to do their own marketing. There are 30,000 people in Burlingame, but everybody's on the computer. How do we get those people off the computer to come to the stores? If we have a sale with 20 or 25% off, business is great, but if it is a regular day without a sale, people do not walk in because they can buy it online for a little bit less, and it is more convenient.
- We have a shop in San Francisco and a shop in Burlingame with fairly identical financial demographics. In the shop in San Francisco, people come in and won't leave the store without buying something, whether it's a small purchase or a large purchase. However in Burlingame, people come in and look, but don't buy as often. The point would be to emphasize the importance of making the purchase itself in Burlingame.
- We need to figure out how to tap into the online commerce. Perhaps we can start delivering and acting like an online retailer, even though we're local and the money is local.

- There is a tendency to blame the landlords when businesses close, but we're not verifying if this is really the case. There may be other factors at play as well.
- The construction of the roundabout has impacted business, particularly for businesses in the immediate vicinity, because it is harder to park near the stores.
- On Broadway, the problem with parking is that it is inconvenient, since the parking is limited to one hour. It does not make sense to require people to park in the lots behind Broadway for longer than one hour when there are lots of open spaces on Broadway itself. The City needs to invest in a parking study to determine the best management of the parking.
- Burlingame shoppers are not trying to "keep up with the Joneses." Vendors at the farmer's market report that shoppers here will buy items if they want them, but are not influenced by trends.
- Whatever we're trying to accomplish with a Shop Local campaign should have a social media component.

Subcommittee members inquired whether the City has the resources to develop a Shop Local campaign in-house, or whether outside help should be enlisted. There may be a need for help in messaging and branding, by someone who understands the market and how to make it look right.

Further comments from members of the public in attendance:

- The Downtown and Broadway BIDs each have their own brochures. To make both districts successful, there should be just one brochure for all the commercial districts. People get confused and go to Burlingame Avenue with a Broadway brochure, and vice versa. There should be just one brochure, and it should be placed in the shuttles, the hotels, and the stores.
- The shuttle map emphasizes the shuttle route, not the businesses. The format could be changed to combine the shuttle map with maps of the businesses. Perhaps an 11 x 17 foldable map.
- This would be a good time to make this type of change. The Chamber of Commerce could help coordinate between the organizations.

Subcommittee members noted that the School District has a newsletter that goes to a lot of families. While they can't advertise specific businesses, but they might be able to mention a Shop Local campaign. We could put the show on the road, with the Mayor and Councilmembers talking about the importance of Shop Local when they go to meetings.

Further comments from members of the public in attendance:

- There should be further coordination with the hotels. The BIDs should to talk to the concierges at least once a month. The concierges can be asked what guests have been asking for each month, and be encouraged to call the BIDs when they need something.

Subcommittee members suggested this could be discussed with the hotel general managers when the subcommittee meets with them in the next couple of months. Business owners should be invited to the meeting so they can discuss the matter with the hoteliers.

In terms of deliveries, subcommittee members suggested that merchants provide input on whether they see a need in the future for delivery spaces for curbside pickups, or for people using ride share or

shuttles. The expectation is that there will be more need for those types of spaces, but it might result in hard conversations as regular parking spaces need to be converted.

The item concluded with confirmation of the Retail Summit on April 17th at with doors opening and light dinner at 6:00 p.m., and the meeting itself starting at 6:30 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no further public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Gardiner
Community Development Director