



## City of Ventura

### Economic Development COVID-19 Gap Plan

Dated: November 25, 2020

#### Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our lives and our communities as we once knew them. The pandemic has placed both the public health and the economy in peril. We still yet, do not know the impact this will have in the long term. While there are many questions still outstanding around the next steps and impacts related to COVID-19, we have been focusing efforts on immediate relief for business and helping them reopen their doors.

For weeks we experienced the near complete closure of our communities. Months later, many businesses are still not open. Life out in the public and business operations, no longer look the same as before the outbreak. The economy was not prepared for a pandemic, nor was our community prepared for the devastating impacts to our businesses. Sadly, we see many businesses that will close for good and never fully recover.

While it is easy to focus on the doom and gloom, we are a community that comes together, to lift each other up and get through the tough times together. The city has made some notable strides to ensure our community and businesses can continue to move forward. Immediately the City responded by providing synthesized relevant information on the closures to our business community and connecting businesses with access to capital. The City moved to electronic submittals for all development projects and created the Outdoor Business Expansion program.

The City of Ventura Economic Development mission is to *Cultivate an environment for economic sustainability and growth. Provide resources that help businesses PLAN, MAKE POSSIBLE, OPEN SHOP & THRIVE. Advance the economic vitality of the local community.* The City is focused on working with the community leaders and partners to envision, plan, and continue implementing strategies and tactics that provide stability and support in the short term and recovery and resilience in the long term for our businesses and community.

Recovery will require substantial collaboration, communication, innovation, and grit. From this our businesses will grow and adapt. This document serves as an initial outline of what steps we need take as we move toward the thriving economy that we all are eager to see again. We anticipate this plan to evolve as conditions warrant, learning happens, and resources are identified.

## **Considerations, and/or opportunities**

Assisting businesses to evolve/adapt requires new ways of thinking and an ability for the City, community partners, local businesses, and other stakeholders to be nimble and innovative. As we develop objectives and tactics, we need to identify what we do know, and what we do not.

1. Employers/Businesses need to know and understand the policies effecting their business are changing rapidly
2. Employers need to have an extreme awareness internally and externally around health and safety. Employers need to implement policies and practices to abide by local and state COVID safety protocols and policies.
3. People are being overwhelmed with information. They desire well-curated summaries, “quick tips,” and easy to digest content that is timely, accurate, and relevant to their immediate needs.
4. Technology use for meetings, trainings and project management has become increasingly normal.
5. Businesses are/will be seeking new/creative/virtual/curated ways to connect with their customers/audience.
6. Businesses will need to consider diversification of their product offerings to address altered requirements around facial coverings, social distancing, changing consumer expectations, and to ensure continued operations in future “shut down” situations.
7. Employer costs per employee may increase as they need to navigate additional considerations related to PPP, safety for their employees, patrons, or guests.
8. “Remote work” is now a reality for many. This could have an unfavorable impact on commercial leasing. This could have a favorable impact to the local residential real-estate market as people migrate from urban cities like San Francisco and LA to Ventura.
9. Businesses should consider ways to adapt to virtual and digital interactions. Reimagining the delivery of services/products independent from time/physical constraints.

## **Business Plan**

We have already seen and experienced different phases of the pandemic, and the impact to the day to day business operations. From initial relief efforts to seeing that a reimagining the way we operate business in the future will be different. We will focus on: RELIEF, REOPENING, RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE (Growth/Adaptation)

This document attempts to identify key objectives and tactical responses the City, and other partners can implement in each phase. This is not a linear execution. If we have learned anything so far, it is that we need to continuous be relooking and reevaluating our approach with the current climate and navigate accordingly. In line with the City’s Communication Team’s efforts, content, messaging, and communications, will be focused on simple and consistent messaging, enhancing public awareness, civic participation, and information sharing.

<b>PHASE: RELIEF</b>		<b>Timeframe: 1-4 months max, 5-10 months moderate, 11-18 months light</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect businesses with essential information and assistance to enable them to weather the immediate disruption until an eventual reopening.</li> <li>• Maintain and encourage as much economic activity as possible within constraints of public health and business process disruption.</li> <li>• Ensure businesses are aware of, and have access to, non-traditional forms of capital and financial support (e.g. grants, stimulus, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, curate, and share information and resources from trusted and relevant sources; package and deliver to business leaders in timely, consumable formats.</li> <li>• Track status of businesses to identify trends, triage needs, and capture/report impacts</li> <li>• Identify and address regulations and processes that can be modified or suspended for the duration of the crisis, providing relief for businesses, or allowing businesses to operate under changing conditions</li> <li>• Work with local and regional non-profits to provide assistance where government services are not available or where they need enhancement</li> </ul>	

<b>PHASE: REOPENING</b>		<b>Timeframe: Stay at Home Order is lifted, and phased reopening begins</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support protocols that allow for localized re-openings where conditions meet specified criteria</li> <li>• Provide clarity to businesses about rules/conditions for reopening and operating, including allowed options, continuing restrictions, etc.</li> <li>• Support businesses in their re-opening process and communication</li> <li>• Identify and advocate for public policy and procedural changes to facilitate business activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve as a conduit to facilitate business input into official reopening criteria and approach development dialogues.</li> <li>• Facilitate early reopening of key revenue generating industries/businesses</li> <li>• Maintain regularly updated and expanded Business Toolkits focused on resources that assist businesses with reopening and rebuilding decisions and activities</li> <li>• Deploy marketing campaign designed to promote local economic activity.</li> <li>• Identify successful strategies and lessons learned by early reopening industries and facilitate other businesses' adoption of best practice</li> </ul>	

<b>PHASE: RECOVERY</b>		<b>Timeframe: Re-opening through 2021</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate access to training and technical support</li> <li>Facilitate local economic activity (b2b, b2c, public investment, etc.)</li> <li>Support businesses in their redesign of business processes, product offerings, customer interfaces, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop business feedback loops, including data tracking/reporting, to provide ongoing identification of trends and needs.</li> <li>Expand training and technical support tools/resources.</li> <li>Identify changes and efficiencies that occurred during the pandemic (e.g. telework, conducting business with less congregation), and support reinvention of how work is done as a result</li> <li>Continue to advocate for recovery support from government to mitigate economic losses in the business community.</li> </ul>	

<b>PHASE: RESILIENCE (Growth / Adaptation)</b>		<b>Timeline: Ongoing</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement long-term Economic Development Strategy.</li> <li>Capitalize, and build on, increased community support/collaboration evidenced during crisis</li> <li>Ensure community participates in, and benefits from, regional efforts to identify new opportunities to expand economy and/or mitigate areas of weakness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand Ventura economy post COVID</li> <li>Support investment in infrastructure needed to prevent, detect, and respond to the next threat of widespread economic disruption. (Broadband)</li> <li>Expand workforce development, including programs targeting re-skill or up-skill training for displaced workers.</li> <li>Expand Educational Partnership, connecting education with business to help bridge the gap to bring Jobs to Ventura.</li> </ul>	

### **GAP PLAN MAINTENANCE**

Timing and triggers to move between phases will be fluid and determined in large measure by conditions and decisions outside the control of the City. Our responsibility is to be prepared, nimble, and effective in implementation whenever the timing is right.

Response to Actions will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the Tracking Log. The GAP Plan and Tracking log documents are located at the City’s Economic Development website. Updates will be posted on the website and shared through the Economic Development Newsletter.