



**MOUNTAIN VIEW**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## **DOWNTOWN BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS 2021 WORKPLAN**

**Presented to the City of Mountain View**

4 May 2021

### **Overview**

For several decades, the City has designated the two Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), also known as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) for the Downtown area to fund improvement and promotional efforts on behalf of the businesses and to create a more attractive and vibrant downtown. There are now two BIAs in effect. The City of Mountain View collects these fees when a business license is issued or renewed. To date, the revenues have been allocated to the Downtown Business Association (DBA), formerly known as the Central Business Association (CBA).

Under the previous arrangement, the DBA had no staff and was dependent on volunteer downtown business owners and board members to execute its work plan. The pandemic exacerbated this situation, causing a severe reduction of resources to execute DBA plans. The DBA had partnered with the Chamber of Commerce on a number of initiatives through the years, and in late 2020 entered into conversations about fully its transferring operations to the Chamber. In December 2020, the DBA Board of Directors voted unanimously to recommend the transfer operations to the Chamber, and to convert the Board to an Advisory Board under the Chamber Board of Directors.

Additionally, in the Spring of 2021, the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce conducted extensive outreach to downtown businesses. The chamber reached out to 165 businesses by visiting in person, by phone, and by email and conducted a survey to gauge the opinion of Downtown Businesses on the transition of management of the Downtown BIAs to the Chamber. To date, the Chamber received 62 survey responses. When asked whether they would be in favor of DBA operations being managed by the Chamber, 52% of survey respondents were in favor and 44% were neutral, 4% were against.

### **2021 Work Plan**

The Mountain View Chamber of Commerce is respectfully requesting that the City Council appoint the Chamber to replace the DBA as recipient of the BIA funds, and for the Chamber to responsibly manage the improvement and promotional efforts for Downtown. With the input of the new Downtown Business Association Advisory Board and direct connections with Downtown businesses, the Chamber created this work plan which describes how the Chamber will continue supporting downtown businesses for the remainder of 2021.

For the past year, the Chamber has been providing direct and focused support to Downtown, including:

#### **Staffing**

The Chamber has a dedicated staff person for the Downtown businesses, as well team resources to provide broader and deeper support.

#### **Marketing and Promotion**

- Continue to drive online demand for the goods/services of local businesses through the Mountain View Marketplace, an online portal which now represents over 140 businesses.

- Attract online and drop-on customers through regular, themed promotions on the Mountain View Marketplace, supplemented with ad campaigns in newspapers, media outlets, and social media, including I Love My MV Businesses Sweepstakes, Xmas Holidays, ValentDINE, Love Mom, Shop Local, Father's Day, Back to School
- Encourage local patronage of businesses through cause-based marketing efforts, such as Dining for AAPI (a campaign where participating restaurants donated a portion of sales to "Stop Asian Hate" and saw a 20-30% net increase in sales)
- Publicize downtown businesses and promote foot traffic with a printed and online Community Guide & Business Directory – featuring a detailed Shopping Map of Downtown
- Hold Ribbon Cuttings, featuring local leaders and special festivities, to bring in customers, add energy to downtown, and obtain press coverage – Ludwig's May 1; Savvy Cellar (TBD)
- Pitch stories to local press and make introductions to local businesses to get media coverage on events, mentions for Castro Street, and quotes/spotlights for specific businesses,

### **Advocacy and Government Relations**

- Be the voice of downtown on city initiatives, including elevating to key city staff issues and concerns that are both broad in scope as well as specific to individual businesses, and advocate for changes that improve the economic vibrancy of downtown. Surveys and interviews will be performed on a regular basis.
- Hold Roundtables and Forums with City on larger issues to build stronger ties, foster better understanding, spark creative ideas, and build win/win scenarios, including Closing Castro; Central/Castro traffic flow; Sidewalk Café Permits; Multi-use permits.
- In partnership with other Chambers of Commerce and with a special focus on building vibrant downtowns.
- Form partnerships between downtown businesses and other entities to improve health conditions and provide new commercial opportunities, such as the partnerships with the City/County/EI Camino Health to bring COVID testing to the Center for Performing Arts.
- Provide business input to Downtown Precise Plan, including surveys and individual interviews
- Provide input into the creation of the City's Small Business Initiative, and assist in its implementation.
- Represent the interests of DBA members on the Downtown Committee.

### **Operations**

- Help small/independent businesses recover from the pandemic, migrate and optimize online commerce, and improve their operations with tools and resources such as the Recovery Kits.
- Grow the Downtown Business Association Advisory Board in number and diversity, as well as encourage direct engagement.
- Increase outreach and personal touch via communication, phone and business visits.
- Promote collaboration between businesses on common issues, shared promotions, and special tools such as the universal gift card that help boost downtown visits.
- Bring the Chamber's high degree of public transparency in its decision making and actions to the DBA by leveraging its processes and communication vehicles.

### **Future Plans**

Continue and deepen the work noted above. Includes summer, Halloween and Holiday advertising and promotional campaigns for downtown businesses and live events, such as wine-walks, as permitted by City/County health ordinances. Additionally, the 50th anniversary of the Art+Wine Festival is being considered in a scaled-down fashion.

Longer term goals, that will serve as the basis for the 2022 annual report (to be approved by City Council in Fall of 2021) include additional promotions and events, more tools and training, and increased outreach and advocacy for both overarching issues (such as Castro Street closures) and ones specific to individual businesses.

## **Conclusion**

Supporting the economic and social vibrancy of Downtown businesses is core to the Chamber's mission and objectives. The team remains deeply engaged with our members and has a fundamental understanding of their needs and opportunities. The Chamber is also able to leverage efforts that improve the City (and region) as a whole, which directly impacts and benefits downtown. In close alliance with all components of Mountain View, including local government, community agencies, public services, and business organizations, and an unwavering commitment to the city, we are uniquely equipped and energized to support our Downtown's recovery and growth. Thank you for this opportunity.