

CITY OF WHITTIER



Economic Development Strategy Fiscal Year 2020-21

Preface

Thank you for your interest in the City of Whittier's economic development program. The local economy is currently experiencing an unprecedented challenge in the wake of COVID-19 and, like many other cities, Whittier businesses are faced with adversity in their efforts to maintain their status quo amidst a public health crisis. Because of this, the City's primary focus in the coming months will be identifying and implementing business assistance and recovery programs. The City will look for opportunities to increase sales tax revenue by working to attract businesses and new jobs, while collaborating with local partners to ensure critical support for our existing businesses. City staff will continue engaging in proactive economic development, exploring new technologies, and promoting the "business-friendly" culture Whittier is known for.

The City maintains a strong partnership with the Whittier Chamber of Commerce. Through joint programming, we provide to the business marketing assistance, free business seminars and events, legislative updates, and more. With the help of organizations like the Small Business Development Center, California Association of Local Economic Development, LAEDC, and other invaluable local partners—Whittier Uptown Association, America's Job Center of California, Tri-Cities ROP, the school districts, Whittier College and Rio Hondo College, etc.—we will continue to collaborate and strengthen our small business community.

A number of residential and commercial developments are under construction, and The Groves at Whittier is taking shape at the former Fred C. Nelles site. The City will look to market one of its last remaining opportunity sites, formerly home to the Alpha Beta market, later this year. Additionally, we will assist our local shopping centers as they adapt to changing retail trends and position themselves for long-term sustainability.

As part of this year's strategic plan, City staff will be researching and exploring new opportunities to encourage and incentivize our existing Shop Whittier local purchasing program, in partnership with business owners and our business associations, to capitalize on hometown support.

The City Council has programmed excess redevelopment bond funds for infrastructure improvements in Uptown Whittier with monies earmarked to fund vital enhancements including streetscape beautification, sewer and water line upgrades, and a parking structure set to open in early 2021. We look forward to bringing new retail and housing to the area while further supporting the many unique shops and eateries that continue to bring people to Whittier.

Don't stop caring after COVID – remember to Shop Whittier first!



Summer 2020
City of Whittier
Business Development Manager

Economic Development Strategy
Fiscal Year 2020-21

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	4
II.	Vision and Mission	4
III.	Current Economic Environment	5
IV.	Principles	8
V.	Economic Development Goals	8
VI.	City-Wide Economic Development Activities	9
	• Business Attraction and Economic Diversification	14
	• Business Retention and Expansion	14
	• Coordination and Cooperation	15
VII.	Action Target Areas	16
	A. Uptown Whittier	16
	B. Whittier Boulevard	18
	• Gateway District	19
	• Workplace District	19
	• Shopping Cluster I	20
	• Center District	21
	• Shopping Cluster II	21
	• Neighborhood Spine	22
	C. Lambert Road	22
	D. Washington Boulevard/PIH Health	23
	E. Manufacturing	24
	F. Housing	25
	G. Workforce Development	25
VIII.	Specific Objectives for Fiscal Year 2020-21	26
IX.	Conclusion	27

I. INTRODUCTION

Economic development is a multi-faceted approach to the policies and programs designed to preserve, enhance, and promote a vibrant and successful community. The success and overall health of businesses within a community is directly linked to the quality of life experienced by the residents of that community, and therefore, of great importance to the community as a whole.

A healthy business community, through the creation of employment and revenue, is a major element in allowing the City to carry out its various functions. Typically, a City's major revenue sources are property tax and sales and use tax. Sales and use tax revenues generated by the business community provide a major contribution to the funding of essential City services, as well as nonessential services, which continues to create a certain quality of life standard that all of Whittier has come to expect and the reason many have chosen Whittier as a place to live, work, shop and play.



Examples of the benefits of an Economic Development Program may include, but are not limited to:

- Enabling the City to address quality of life issues, while keeping the general tax burden to its residents at as low a level as possible.
- Enabling the City to better respond to the community's desire for quality of life "infrastructure" investment, i.e. roads, parks, community centers, aquatics facilities, City buildings, etc.
- Creating new, permanent jobs and retaining existing jobs in the community.
- Encouraging business-to-business transactions.
- Re-patriating dollars currently spent outside the community so that the economic investment of local residents will stay in Whittier.
- Communicating the value of a sound and diversified economy to residents and business owners alike.
- Maintaining a healthy balance of residential, commercial/retail, industrial, and service.

II. VISION AND MISSION

The City of Whittier's Economic Development Strategy includes a vision statement as well as a mission statement. The Vision for economic development in the City of Whittier is:

“A well-balanced city where business complements and adds to the quality of life for all who live, work, shop, and play in Whittier.”

The mission statement established to achieve this vision is:

“Facilitate the growth, diversification, and stability of the Whittier economy;
create prosperous income opportunities for all citizens of the City;
expand the economy; and provide a sustainable future for Whittier.”

III. CURRENT ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT & COVID-19

The City of Whittier has maintained a strong and steady surge of commercial activity in recent years and businesses have been doing well after suffering the recession of the late 2000s. Each of Whittier’s former auto dealerships has been redeveloped or constructed into new housing, recreation, and shopping centers. Additionally, the Groves at Whittier will soon yield 140,000 square feet of unique housing, quality retail, and new commercial uses come 2021.

Additionally, the citizens of Whittier passed a local sales tax measure on the March 2020 ballot which raised the City’s sales tax from 9.50% to 10.25%. Funds from Measure W will help to ensure the City’s long-term fiscal sustainability and support City services including public safety, youth services, and infrastructure improvements, as well as help further economic development efforts.

However, even with newer sources of revenue and an otherwise thriving business community, the current global pandemic caused by the emergence of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has forced communities throughout the world to adapt and shift their economic priorities overnight amidst ongoing crisis relief efforts. It now means doing more with less, working remotely from home, or the loss of employment altogether for many residents in our region. This is an all-hands-on-deck moment for Whittier, and the City’s leadership relative to business support and recovery remains paramount.

Whittier Recovery Plan

In May of 2020, the Whittier City Council adopted the **Whittier Recovery Plan** (WRP), a fluid course of action focused on assisting residents and businesses by implementing and leveraging Federal, State, County, and local funding, programs, and services to support recovery and sustainability.



The Plan to date has incorporated the following:

- Adoption of a local eviction moratorium, in line with the County and State, to assist tenants who are unable to pay rent due to economic hardship as a result of COVID-19
- An increase of the City's "Buy Local" Policy from 2% to 10%, ensuring that local vendors and those bidding on City services that fall within the 10% range will be given priority consideration
- A 30% reduction in business license fees for new and renewing businesses during Fiscal Year 2020-21
- A 25% Buy/Hire Local Rebate Program, administered through the Community Development Department, aimed at incentivizing the purchase of local, Whittier-based supplies, goods, and contractor services for Fiscal Year 2020-21
- The Greenleaf Promenade: a temporary closure of Greenleaf Avenue between Wardman Avenue to mid-block between Philadelphia Street and Bailey Street, allowing for outdoor restaurant dining service and retail expansion due to COVID-19 limitations. The Promenade was tentatively approved to run through October 25, 2020, with the potential for extension based on public health restrictions.
- "Unity in the Community" COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grant Program: available to businesses located within the City's Business Improvement Area and administered by the Whittier Uptown Association, in partnership with the Whittier Sunrise Rotary, providing \$500-\$1,000 grants to be used for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and/or necessary furniture for outdoor dining set-up. The City of Whittier has initially appropriated \$20,000 to support the grant program exclusive to Uptown Whittier businesses and restaurants.
- COVID Compliance Small Business Grant Program: \$500 grants available to Whittier small businesses located City-wide for the purchase of, or reimbursement for, mandatory PPE materials and other items related to reducing the spread of the virus within the workplace. The City has initially allocated \$100,000 to fund the program, with the potential to review and provide additional funds as necessary.

Employment, Sales Tax & Housing

The unemployment rate is an indicator used to determine the health of the economy. The City's unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) is currently 17%, in line with that of Los Angeles County (18.2%), but slightly higher than the State of California (13.3%) and the national unemployment rate (10.5%). (*EDD, Labor Market Information Division, July 2020*). These numbers, in comparison with the prior year's statistics which placed Whittier at a mere 4.6% unemployment rate, shows the dramatic effect COVID-19 has had on our local economy and throughout the country in recent months.

In terms of sales tax revenue, the City of Whittier gross receipts during the January through March 2020 period (the most recent available) were down 6.4% compared to the same quarter one year ago after adjusting for proper payment timing. The largest factor in this decrease was lower proceeds from casual eateries after the State's March 19 shutdown orders shuttered

restaurant dining rooms near the tail end of the quarter to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous retail outlets were also required to temporarily close, with family apparel retailers particularly impacted. Additionally, many employees transitioned to working from home, which negatively impacted gasoline sales. Conversely, allocations from the countywide use tax pool increased 15% after a recent legislative change has allowed the State to collect tax revenue from additional small third-party sellers on the internet, most notably via Amazon.

For the year ending in March 2020, General Consumer Goods provided the City's largest sales tax revenue by business group at 21%, followed by Restaurants and Hotels at 19%, allocations from the state and countywide use tax pools at 15%, Autos and Transportation at 11%, and Fuel and Service Stations at 11%. Whittier will continue to diversify its business base, so not to rely on only one or two business sectors. (*HdL Companies, August 2020*)

There's no question that cities, including Whittier, had already begun to feel the impact of internet sales and e-commerce on our business climate and sales tax generation, however the coronavirus has challenged every business to rethink their processes and ability to sell product efficiently and safely. As bricks and mortar retail continues to shift and evolve in the coming years, the City will look to support not only our small business community, but also work closely with our larger shopping centers to assist them with their plans for repositioning themselves as "destination centers" throughout Whittier. Many large "big box" stores are no longer in need of the square footage they currently possess. Therefore, industry discussions have begun to point toward the need for exploring mix-use development concepts and creating the right mix of traditional retail with "experiential" retail, including things like movie theatres, fitness clubs, and public gathering spaces. It is more important than ever for local residents to make their purchases in Whittier, and the City will continue to keep a pulse on our centers and their plans for long-term sustainability.

The local housing market has remained steady, showing signs of a jump post pandemic, but there remains much uncertainty regarding how long it will last. Sales remain lower than the year prior, however numbers are up from the spring when the local Stay-at-Home Public Health Orders brought the market to a near standstill.

There are a number of residential projects underway in Whittier, including ones at Hadley and Magnolia, Workman Mill and Beverly Blvd, the Park Place project on the site of the former Toyota used car lot, and an upcoming apartment project at the Five Points intersection. The current and proposed mix of residential projects will provide a rich balance of housing types from which current and future residents may choose. In addition, 750 new residential units are currently under development at the former Fred C. Nelles site and are selling as quickly as they are being built. This is great news for our community as it not only addresses housing needs, but the project will feature new retail as well.

IV. PRINCIPLES

The City of Whittier is committed to proactive economic development. Accordingly, the principles outlined below are the fundamental rules that will guide economic development in the City.

- It is an appropriate role for the City of Whittier to be involved in proactive economic development activities that address the goals outlined in this Economic Development Strategy.
- The City, where appropriate and within the limitations of law, should provide incentives for quality business investment in terms of retention or attraction in targeted areas. These incentives could include, but are not limited to, general business information; site location assistance; technical assistance referrals; employment linkages; marketing and public information assistance; permit processing and problem solving; financing referrals; economic data and analysis, etc.
- There must be an active partnership between the City, the business community, business organizations such as the Whittier Area Chamber of Commerce, Whittier Uptown Association, Uptown Whittier Improvement Association, residential neighborhoods, etc., as the City cannot be expected to act solely on its own to achieve the objectives outlined in this Strategy.

V. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The following are the general goals established to achieve the City’s adopted vision and mission statement related to economic development:

- Create a strong, diversified, and sustainable local economy and enhance the quality of life within the community by promoting a balance of residential, commercial, and industrial development.
- Increase the City’s sales tax revenue growth and tax base.
- Retain and support existing businesses.
- Encourage and promote the development and enhancement of retail areas to achieve a vibrant shopping, dining, and/or entertainment experience.
- Look for ways to capitalize on tourism to grow existing and develop new market sectors.
- Work with shopping center owners impacted by internet sales to create lifestyle-driven “experience” destinations through staff and community engagement.



- Encourage active cooperation between the City, our partners, and local businesses concerning economic development issues and COVID-19 recovery.
- Promote local resident support of businesses located in Whittier through the Shop Whittier program.
- Encourage job creation where possible.
- Understand market trends to best position the City for future growth and change.

VI. CITY-WIDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

A business-friendly environment is a philosophy shared throughout Whittier City Hall. We continue to take pride in being named the 2012, and more recently, the 2018 Most Business-Friendly City in Los Angeles County by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation. The highly sought recognition affirms that we have been successful in our efforts. However, we must continue to explore the best ways to serve our businesses to the highest degree possible. The continued support by our partners such as the Whittier Area Chamber of Commerce, Whittier Uptown Association, Uptown Whittier Improvement Association, Tri-Cities ROP, Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, Small Business Development Center, America’s Job Center of California, etc. is critical to maintaining the level of service our community has come to expect.



One of the major benefits offered by the City of Whittier to developers and the business community is our convenient permitting process. The Community Development Department is the hub of permitting for commercial and residential development projects in the City. City Hall serves as a “one-stop shop” for all development related services including planning permits, building permits, building inspections, business licenses, permits for construction in the public right-of-way, information on operating a business in Whittier, information on developable sites, and other general information. The City also recently implemented the new Accela software program, which is available to residents and contractors online via the City’s website. This enhanced permit system allows for access to agency services and electronic document review, and makes tracking and payment easier. The software also offers a mobile app for inspectors and contractors making the permit process quicker and more efficient. In light of COVID-19, the need for online access and permitting has become even more important.

The team effort of City departments results in fast and convenient services such as:

- Coordinated customer contacts with appropriate staff representatives;
- Related development services in a central location;
- Streamlined, expedited permitting processes; and
- Plan checks and permit issuance combined in one location.

Whittier Express Permitting at City Hall includes:

- Dedicated Business Ombudsperson
- Planning 2nd Floor in Community Development
- Building 2nd Floor in Community Development
- Public Works/Utilities 1st Floor
- Business Licenses 1st Floor
- Cashier 1st Floor (fees for all permits paid here)



Some development projects may require separate review and permits by Fire, Health, Alcoholic Beverage Control, Sanitation, School Districts, or SCAQMD. Community Development staff are available to assist in verifying applicability and to provide referrals to those agencies as necessary.

Despite the elimination of redevelopment, business development and assistance remain a top priority for the City of Whittier. Assembly Bill 1484 allows Whittier to use its remaining redevelopment bond funds, as programmed by the City Council, to provide the City an opportunity to implement some of the improvements charted in the Uptown Specific Plan such as parking, utilities, streetscape improvements, and lighting. Per Council direction, staff has worked closely with

Uptown property owners on the establishment and implementation of the Uptown Whittier Improvement Association (UWIA). Since its forming, the group has hired additional security ambassadors to patrol the area and embarked on sidewalk cleaning and other beautification efforts. The UWIA promises to support a much-anticipated transformation in Uptown, in conjunction with the approximately \$12.5 million in redevelopment bonds that have been allocated to support such projects and new programs.

The City's approach to being business-friendly also includes public safety. We believe that a safe business community leads to a prosperous business community. Loitering, graffiti, and the growing issue of homelessness are general challenges that affect many Los Angeles County cities and the Whittier Police Department has taken these challenges seriously. Whittier is patrolled by its own Police Department and boasts a highly successful Community Based Policing Program. A cornerstone of this model program is a partnership between the Police Department, local residents, businesses, and non-profit organizations like Whittier Area First Day and The Salvation Army to produce a high quality of life for all residents.



The City's economic development activities also include coordinating a "RED" Team approach with our local and regional partners. The RED (Rapid Economic Development) Team is a valuable resource offered by the City to assist local businesses. The RED Team may be coordinated for businesses that are:

- Growing;
- New or opening a new location;
- Considering a layoff; or
- Making a significant change to their business strategy.

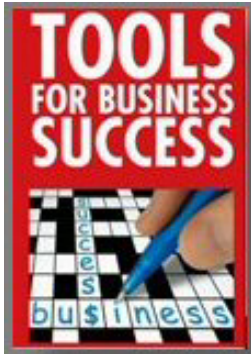
By identifying the early warning signs of at-risk companies, the RED Team can marshal resources and personnel to address a company's needs, not only preserving existing jobs but creating expansion opportunities and new jobs. Furthermore, realizing the importance of business retention, staff conducts regular business outreach and visitations on an on-going basis.

The global pandemic has severely affected businesses and it remains critical that the City continue to assist and help maintain the business base we currently have. Continued use of data such as sales tax analysis, trends, economic drivers, emerging industries, and new or expanding businesses will assist in the City's business attraction and retention efforts moving forward.



Staff continues to look for new and creative economic development programs for Whittier businesses. Furthermore, the City will focus on helping businesses remain sustainable and competitive in today's highly technical and social media savvy marketplace. As previously mentioned, businesses after COVID-19 must be able to compete in today's market using enhanced technology and digital platforms, as traditional bricks-and-mortar is no longer enough to sustain viability. It will mean more than furthering innovation but ensuring survival and long-term success. Businesses will need to adapt to a faster-paced tech environment, implementing

new systems and social media communications to remain relevant in a post-COVID environment. This year, City staff will focus largely on providing tools and educating the business community in this area. The City and Chamber’s business seminar series will also focus on online accessibility and digital marketing to help businesses meet the changing demands of consumers.



Recognizing the importance of technology, the City offers an online economic development program called “Tools for Business Success.” The internet-based program offers local, state, federal, and best-of-the-web resources directly from the City of Whittier website. This economic development tool makes it easier for businesses to start and grow in Whittier. Business owners can easily access information and resources from their home or office computer saving them valuable time and money. By maintaining this service, the City has been able to provide cost-effective and much-needed resources during times of limited funding. The “Online Help” button is available throughout the day and evening hours, six days a week. If someone is having difficulty finding a specific resource or information for their business, the Online Help button connects the businessperson to a “live” representative via an instant message chat window, further saving the City time and money. We will continue to market this valuable economic development tool to local businesses and monitor the program’s new format and effectiveness.

New this year will be the addition of Yes2Connect, a pilot program designed to take a holistic, whole community approach toward economic development and resiliency. The Yes2Connect platform fosters an entrepreneurial spirit and was designed to encourage local buying and shopping, as well as offer elements of business plan

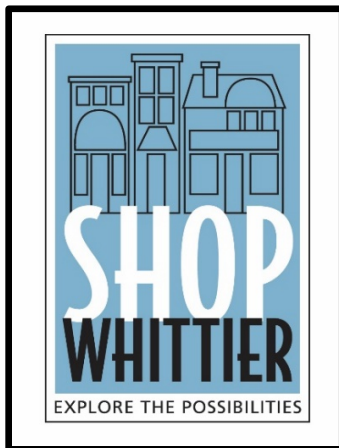


coordination and emergency preparedness. The program provides tools to support all local businesses, including minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses, and bridges the technology gap between large and small businesses by providing easy ways to utilize loyalty programs, e-gift cards, and an online mini-mart for those without an online presence. The aim of the new program is to help reduce the number of business closures and job losses that traditionally follow a major crisis or emergency disaster by connecting community officials, organization leaders, businesses, employees, and residents so communities can quickly prioritize needs and embark on the recovery process together. Whittier is looking forward to serving as one of the first communities to feature Yes2Connect and staff will be working toward educating and engaging local businesses and residents on all it has to offer as we continue to navigate the aftermath of COVID-19 together.

The Community Development Department has also merged its social media presence for economic development via the City’s online communities including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in an effort to better connect with our residents, business owners, and community

members. Given the increase in development throughout the City, use of the City's growing social media platforms will continue to allow us the opportunity to highlight major projects, educate the public on our processes, and offer helpful tips and assistance. Social media has become a great avenue for positive and proactive engagement within the community and our consistent online presence gives us the chance to showcase the great things happening in town through photos, videos, and interactive posts, as well as connect with local partners and spotlight mutual achievements. Social media has become another tool for business attraction as we market Whittier as "open for business."

An economic development electronic newsletter, *Growing Whittier*, is published on a timely basis and features relevant content featuring development news and projects occurring throughout town. The e-newsletter offers the ability to reach more individuals at a significant cost savings and is shared with commercial real estate contacts, Whittier businesses, community partners, and others. Additionally, issues will be made available online via the Economic Development section of the City's website and shared on social media for the greater community to explore with instructions for subscribing. This year, staff will look to increase efforts to engage in thoughtful storytelling and utilize the City's broader public information strategy, social media, and digital communications to further reach our marketing and branding goals.



Promoting and incentivizing the "Shop Whittier" campaign for residents and businesses, combined with strengthening our partnerships with economic development organizations (Whittier Chamber, LAEDC, Whittier Uptown Association, CMTC, America's Job Center of California, etc.), will help leverage local buying power and create a resilient business community during this challenging economic time. Additionally, the City will continue to monitor and support statewide economic development legislation that may evolve in this post-redevelopment environment.

The City will continue to offer the following incentives and assistance programs to businesses, property owners, and/or developers:

- Business ombudsperson and one-on-one consultation;
- Expedited permit processing;
- No impact/exaction fees;
- Free business seminars;
- Assistance with special events;
- Commercial broker roundtable meetings;
- Site selection assistance;
- Guide to Doing Business in Whittier (online handbook);
- Buy Whittier 10% local preference;
- Buy/Hire Local Rebate Program for building permits;
- Coordinated development and project review;

- Business license facilitation and fee reduction; and
- Business outreach and visitation.

The following are specific strategies for city-wide economic development activities:

Business Attraction and Economic Diversification Strategies

- 1) Work with site selectors, real estate developers, state and local economic development agencies, and other partners to attract new businesses and industries to Whittier properties through attendance at ICSC conventions (virtual or in-person) and other marketing events.
- 2) Conduct regular contact with brokers representing vacant properties to assist with business attraction efforts.
- 3) Meet with potential developers wanting to relocate or expand in the city.
- 4) Continue to utilize data to target new and expanding national businesses.
- 5) Participate in a full range of economic development activities, including enhanced marketing and promotion, research, meetings, and other efforts to coordinate and attract new business and industry to Whittier.
- 6) Provide updated demographics information on the city's website to assist with business attraction efforts.
- 7) Continue to offer a "business-friendly" approach to customer service.
- 8) Explore tourism opportunities as a business attraction mechanism with the Whittier Chamber, Whittier Uptown Association, and Uptown Whittier Improvement Association.
- 9) Coordinate periodic brokers' roundtable meetings with Community Development staff.
- 10) Invest in enhanced infrastructure to facilitate long term growth.
- 11) Sell former Whittier Redevelopment Agency parcels to facilitate new development.

Business Retention and Expansion

Strategies

- 1) Maintain open communication with businesses and meet with them on an ongoing basis to discuss current operations, future needs, determine plans for changes or expansions, etc.
- 2) Continue business outreach and visitation to ensure constant communication and feedback with the business community.
- 3) Continue to use data to target existing businesses that may be positioned to expand within the city.

- 4) Continue active involvement in the Whittier Chamber of Commerce and other business groups.
- 5) Participate with the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, Small Business Development Center, and other partners to assist and retain existing businesses.
- 6) Continue to evaluate the provisions of the City's Specific Plans to ensure positive impacts to businesses on Whittier Boulevard and in Uptown.
- 7) Encourage the purchase of local goods and services through the "Buy Whittier" Policy.
- 8) Partner with the Whittier Chamber of Commerce and Whittier Uptown Association to showcase, wherever possible, business success and expansion through City participation in ribbon cuttings and other business recognition programs.
- 9) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.

Coordination and Cooperation

Strategies

- 1) Continue to support and promote the City's efforts to streamline and make the development review process more efficient by offering developers an opportunity to meet with staff and address project features and potential issues on the front end.
- 2) Serve as a knowledgeable and reliable source for local business assistance and development programs.
- 3) Expand efforts to share information regarding the City's economic development programs and activities with community constituencies in order to increase loyalty and engagement with the City's economic development program through local media outlets, City website, and economic development newsletter, as well as coordinated outreach with other agencies.
- 4) Leverage marketing and development opportunities through partnerships with local economic development organizations such as the Whittier Chamber, Whittier Uptown Association, Uptown Whittier Improvement Association, Small Business Development Center, America's Job Center of California, etc.
- 5) Maintain and ensure timely dissemination of information via the City's website such as upcoming business seminars and conferences, demographics information, etc.
- 6) Work closely with the Code Enforcement Division to ensure commercial properties are well-maintained and respond to property owner issues and concerns.
- 7) Support efforts in Whittier by other governmental agencies, such as Caltrans, for street improvements and off-ramps maintenance, as well as MTA for the future Gold Line extension.
- 8) Connect employers to America's Job Center of America and Tri-Cities ROP for business services such as employee recruitment and job training.

VII. ACTION TARGET AREAS

It is essential that the strategies identified to meet the goals outlined above be clear, concise, and measurable. In order to provide focus on the strategies outlined below, the following economic development target areas have been established. It is staff's intent to continue providing a report of economic development activities and progress to the City Council on a quarterly basis.

A. Uptown Whittier

Uptown, the City's historic business district, is the "heart" of the community, both from a business and cultural standpoint. Uptown has made great strides, given the ever-evolving economy, and has suffered significantly in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. The lack of redevelopment financial resources in recent years left the City with limited ability to address major infrastructure issues in Uptown such as



parking constraints and the inability to improve the lighting and streetscape. However, as previously stated, Assembly Bill 1484 allows the City to use its existing redevelopment bond funds to focus on Uptown infrastructure specifically. Implementing some of the Uptown Whittier Specific Plan recommendations with the bond proceeds, such as additional parking and infrastructure improvements, will help create a more thriving business district.



In 2018, the City Council approved a redesign of the soon-to-be completed Uptown Parking Structure to a 3.5 level structure and keeping the "Main Street" design as previously selected. The new 3.5 level structure will feature 351 stalls, two elevators, bicycle racks, and will have conduit in place for future solar and electric vehicle charging stations. The project has remained a top priority in the City's focus

toward improving Uptown for residents and attracting visitors to the area for dining, shopping, and entertainment. The new, state-of-the-art structure is anticipated to open in early 2021.

Uptown continues to gain recognition as a regional dining destination and attract local entrepreneurs willing to invest in new restaurants, as well as "foodies" from throughout the region. The new Poet Gardens dining hall, located on the ground level of the historic Nixon Building, is now officially open and features the Whittier Brewing Co. and other local food vendors in an eclectic and communal atmosphere. There have been a number of additional businesses that have opened in Uptown or are in the process, including the Modern Shaman, Kalaveras, and the much-anticipated Super Mex. Finally, the City will look to begin the process of

developing the former Alpha Beta site, the City's last remaining large opportunity site located at the corner of Hadley Street and Comstock Avenue in Uptown. Staff will be soliciting feedback and direction from the City Council and begin accepting proposals later this year.

Following are specific strategies for the area.

Strategies

- 1) Serve as a liaison to the Uptown Whittier Improvement Association, approved by property owners in Uptown Whittier.
- 2) Use bond proceeds under Assembly Bill 1484 to implement the Parking Management Plan's recommendations.
- 3) Implement the recommendations of the Uptown Specific Plan as development proposals are received, including parking and streetscape improvements.
- 4) Educate the business community and developers on the zoning guidelines of the Uptown Specific Plan.
- 5) Release RFQ/RFP for development of the former Alpha Beta site.
- 6) Identify ways to promote tourism in Uptown through marketing, tours, and special events, in conjunction with local associations, restaurants, and the Whittier Museum.
- 7) Continue to foster relationships with property owners, property managers, and commercial leasing agents to assist with identifying new uses and tenants, especially as we cautiously anticipate the effects of COVID-19 play out with regard to business closures or vacancies.
- 8) Conduct regular contact with brokers representing vacant properties to assist with business attraction efforts.
- 9) Provide a City liaison to the Whittier Uptown Association and provide a City update report during Board meetings.
- 10) Provide administrative services to the Whittier Uptown Association for annual re-approval of business improvement area and levy of assessments.
- 11) Assist with marketing the Uptown area to the greater Whittier area and region.
- 12) Provide coordination and implementation of the temporary Greenleaf Promenade, which was instituted initially as a result of COVID-19, however may be revisited during warmer months as a means of attracting visitors to the area.
- 13) Assist with the processing of special events and coordinating logistics for the Friday Farmers Market, Spring Antique Fair, Car Show, Dia de los Muertos Art and Music Festival, Holiday Sonata, Christmas Parade, etc.



- 14) Incorporate any identified capital improvements into the City's Capital Improvement Program to meet needed infrastructure requirements for future development (i.e. alleys, streets, and parking lots lighting upgrades, sewer upgrades, etc.).
- 15) Continue business outreach and visitation to ensure constant communication and feedback with the Uptown business community.
- 16) Connect employers to America's Job Center of California for business services such as employee recruitment and training.
- 17) Minimize code violations through outreach and Code Enforcement.
- 18) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.

B. Whittier Boulevard

The Whittier Boulevard Specific Plan (WBSP) was originally adopted in 2005 and updated in August 2011. The Specific Plan represents the zoning along Whittier Boulevard that consists of five land-use districts: the Gateway Segment, Workplace District, Shopping Cluster District, Center District, and Neighborhood Spine District. The zoning clusters specific land uses into distinct districts. For example, within the Neighborhood Spine in east Whittier, multi-family housing is permitted along Whittier Boulevard. The Plan also includes street and landscape design enhancements to Whittier Boulevard.

The Fred C. Nelles Youth Correctional Facility (Nelles), which closed in 2004, is a 75-acre site previously owned by the state and Brookfield Residential is now well underway on a mixed-use development that will include up to 750 homes and approximately 140,000 sq. ft. of commercial development. Nelles is the last large piece of underutilized land in the City and its development will have a significant positive impact on the local economy. As part of the approval, Nelles was removed from the Whittier Boulevard Specific Plan and given its own Specific Plan development standards.



Below is a description of the strategies for each district along Whittier Boulevard:

Gateway District

Strategies

- 1) Continue to foster relationships with property owners, property managers, and commercial leasing agents to assist with identifying new uses and filling vacancies.
- 2) Conduct regular contact with brokers representing vacant properties to assist with business attraction efforts.
- 3) Maintain communication with the County to ensure continued planning of street and public infrastructure improvements and code enforcement efforts.
- 4) Minimize code violations through outreach and Code Enforcement.
- 5) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.

Workplace District

Strategies

- 1) Continue to foster relationships with property owners, property managers, and commercial leasing agents to assist with identifying new uses and filling vacancies.
- 2) Conduct regular contact with brokers representing vacant properties to assist with business attraction efforts.
- 3) Promote the City's Opportunity Zone tax benefits to property owners and potential developers.
- 4) Assist with the development of the Leggett and Platt site. Staff is currently in discussions with a potential tenant and will look to streamline efforts to facilitate their proposed project.
- 5) Assist PIH Health and other major employers with potential expansion efforts.
- 6) Assist with the identification and development of other medical and biotechnology uses in proximity to PIH Health, including Washington Boulevard and Whittier Boulevard.
- 7) Continue business outreach and visitation to ensure constant communication and feedback with the business community.
- 8) Connect employers to America's Job Center of California for business services such as employee recruitment and training.
- 9) Assist with the development of the southeast corner of Whittier Boulevard and Philadelphia Street as a gateway to Uptown.



- 10) Assist in the development of properties adjacent to the southeast corner of Whittier Boulevard and Philadelphia for possible medical office use along the Boulevard.
- 11) Consider street improvement plans for Whittier Boulevard between Sorenson Avenue and 5-Points.
- 12) Continue to study the manufacturing area on the east side of Whittier Boulevard in the district and encourage job-creating businesses to locate to the area.
- 13) Continue the on-going discussion and assist with the development process of the former Five Points Whittier Redevelopment Agency owned site. A project is also currently underway across Washington Boulevard that will feature a mix of housing and the adaptive reuse of the historic Googie car wash.
- 14) Meet with property owners on the west side of Whittier Boulevard to assess their current and future needs as the area develops.
- 15) Encourage manufacturing businesses to utilize resources and participate in programs through CMTC.
- 16) Minimize code violations through outreach and Code Enforcement.
- 17) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.

Shopping Cluster I

Strategies

- 1) Maintain ongoing communication with The Quad shopping center management (TRC Retail) and assist with streamlining future development and/or repositioning plans.
- 2) Continue to foster relationships with property owners, property managers, and commercial leasing agents to assist with identifying new uses and filling vacancies.
- 3) Conduct regular contact with brokers representing vacant properties to assist with business attraction efforts.
- 4) Sell the former Whittier Redevelopment Agency site, 12705 Whittier Blvd.





- 5) Maintain open communication with the remaining auto dealership (Ocean Honda of Whittier) and conduct outreach meetings as needed.
- 6) Continue business outreach and visitation to ensure constant communication and feedback with the business community.
- 7) Minimize code violations through outreach and Code Enforcement.

- 8) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.

Center District

Strategies

- 1) Assist with the ongoing development of the Park Place luxury apartments at the former used Toyota parking lot.
- 2) Maintain open communication with the remaining auto dealership (Toyota of Whittier) and conduct outreach meetings with dealer as needed.
- 3) Continue to foster relationships with property owners, property managers, and commercial leasing agents to assist with identifying new uses and filling vacancies.
- 4) Conduct regular contact with brokers representing vacant properties to assist with business attraction efforts.
- 5) Continue business outreach and visitation to ensure constant communication and feedback with the business community.
- 6) Minimize code violations through outreach and Code Enforcement.
- 7) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.



Shopping Cluster II

Strategies

- 1) Maintain ongoing communication with Whittwood Town Center shopping center management (Kimco) and assist with streamlining future development and/or repositioning plans.



Draft renderings of proposed changes to the center have been presented to City staff and the City is working proactively with Kimco on their long-term goals for updating the layout at Whittwood.

- 2) Continue to foster relationships with property owners, property managers and commercial leasing agents to assist with identifying new uses and filling vacancies.
- 3) Conduct regular contact with brokers representing vacant properties to assist with business attraction efforts.
- 4) Assist in the reuse of the Cal Domestic site.
- 5) Minimize code violations through outreach and Code Enforcement.
- 6) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.

Neighborhood Spine

Strategies

- 1) Assist developers in identifying opportunity sites.
- 2) Finalize street improvements for Whittier Boulevard from Santa Gertrudes Avenue to Valley Home Avenue including development of future landscape medians.
- 3) Minimize code violations through outreach and Code Enforcement.
- 4) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.



C. Lambert Road

Strategies

- 1) Continue to foster relationships with property owners, property managers and commercial leasing agents to assist with identifying new uses and filling vacancies.
- 2) Conduct regular contact with brokers representing vacant properties to assist with business attraction efforts.
- 3) Minimize code violations through outreach and Code Enforcement.
- 4) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.

D. Washington Boulevard/PIH Health

Whittier is fortunate to have a regional hospital, PIH Health, in the City to help protect the health and safety of the community while providing jobs to local residents. PIH Health has consistently been recognized by Truven Health Analytics as one of America's Top 100 Hospitals placing PIH Health Hospital Whittier in the top 2% of all hospitals in the United States. In addition, the 2019 Three-Year Accreditation with Commendation was awarded to the PIH Health Whittier Hospital Comprehensive Community Cancer Program by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC); was recognized by IBM Watson as one of the nation's 50 Top Cardiovascular Hospitals in 2019; was named a 2019 Most Wired hospital by the American Hospital Association (AHA); and named a Favorite Workplace twice by the Los Angeles News Group. PIH Health serves more than 2 million residents in Los Angeles and Orange Counties and throughout the San Gabriel Valley, investing millions each year in community education and free and low-cost services to support those with the greatest need, and remains the City's largest employer.

PIH Health continues to purchase property and invest in the development of new medical businesses within the community. In July of 2019, the hospital announced it had acquired Pioneer Medical Group and all its assets. Forty-six healthcare providers are now part of its existing medical group, PIH Health Physicians (PHP). With this acquisition, PIH Health adds eight medical office buildings to its network which are spread throughout the cities of Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Long Beach, Los Alamitos, and South Gate; extending PIH Health's reach of services to well over 50,000 community members and bringing an additional 75 jobs to our community.

The City will be working closely with PIH Health regarding partnered economic development efforts, as well as our Washington Boulevard Light Rail Transit Coalition, to develop the future Gold Line station and associated Transit-Oriented Communities planning. Integration of a Gold Line station near this location offers enhanced transit and commuter access for local workers and will help to attract further investment to the area.



Strategies

1. Assist PIH Health Hospital with any future expansion plans or improvements.
2. Work with Washington Blvd. Light Rail Transit Coalition and the Hospital to continue developing the future Gold Line station.
3. Assist with the development of other medical/biotechnology uses in proximity to the Hospital, including Washington Boulevard, Whittier Boulevard, and the Workplace District.
4. Continue to foster relationships with property owners, property managers, and commercial leasing agents to assist with identifying new uses and filling vacancies.
5. Conduct regular contact with brokers representing vacant properties to assist with business attraction efforts.
6. Minimize code violations through outreach and Code Enforcement.
7. Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.
8. Encourage the Gold Line expansion and transit-oriented development along the Washington Boulevard route.

E. Manufacturing

Strategies

- 1) Continue to study the manufacturing area in the Workplace District and encourage job-creating businesses to locate in the district.
- 2) Encourage manufacturing businesses to participate in the California Manufacturing Technology Consulting programs through the CMTC.
- 3) Encourage manufacturing businesses to participate in the Recycling Market Development Zone.
- 4) Meet with the property owners on Whittier Boulevard to assess their current and future needs as the area develops.
- 5) Communicate and educate the business community on new technological tools and resources.

F. Housing

Strategies

- 1) Assist with current townhome projects including Cambridge Place, Park Place, Five Points, and the development of the former ICC site.
- 2) Encourage the development of housing within the Whittier Boulevard Specific Plan area where zoned.
- 3) Encourage the development of housing within the Uptown Whittier Specific Plan Area.
- 4) Encourage the rehabilitation and preservation of older housing stock in Whittier.
- 5) Complete the update to the City's General Plan and Housing Element.
- 6) Assist The Salvation Army in facilitating a temporary emergency shelter at the Whittier Senior Center and the completion of a permanent Navigation Center at the existing Salvation Army site on Pickering Avenue utilizing multiple Federal, State and local funds, including monies obtained through the CARES Act.



G. Workforce Development

Strategies

- 1) Work closely with economic development representatives at the County and State level to leverage and promote resources and COVID-19 recovery workforce programs.
- 2) Maintain relationships and communication with America's Job Center of California, Rio Hondo College, Whittier College, and the Whittier Union High School District, including the Whittier Adult School and programs such as the Tri-Cities Regional Occupation Program (ROP).
- 3) Connect employers to America's Job Center of California for business services such as employee recruitment and job training.
- 4) Refer businesses to county, state, and federal employment programs such as the Welfare-to-Work Program, California Employment & Training Panel, and Federal On-the-Job Training Programs.
- 5) Encourage collaboration between the business community and educational partners for the purpose of implementing satellite classrooms in commercial areas or other similar opportunities for the mutual benefit of workers and business owners.
- 6) Encourage the business community to offer internships, career development courses, and skills enhancement workshops where possible.



VIII. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020-21

<p>Quarter 1, July through September 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update the COVID-19 Business Resources Page on the City’s website• Manage and track the City’s COVID-19 Whittier Recovery Plan stats and make adjustments or recommendations to Council as necessary• Coordinate “fast track” permitting services for ongoing Groves project• Facilitate discussion and streamline service for proposed development of the former Leggett & Platt site• Promote the California Competes Tax Credit to local businesses• Update the “Doing Business in Whittier” online handbook• Produce and distribute <i>Growing Whittier</i> electronic newsletter• Participate in economic development webinars/conferences/conventions• Organize outreach to top sales tax producers in the City• Serve as the liaison to local business organizations including the Chamber, WUA, and UWIA & promote “Shop Whittier” campaign• Coordinate and participate in business assistance seminars and/or events• Administer the Greenleaf Promenade Outdoor Dine & Shop Program• Coordinate and administer two COVID-19 Small Business Grant Programs in partnership with the Whittier Uptown Association & Chamber• Conduct business outreach and visitation
<p>Quarter 2, October through December 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update the COVID-19 Business Resources Page on the City’s website• Manage and track the City’s COVID-19 Whittier Recovery Plan stats and make adjustments or recommendations to Council as necessary• Coordinate “fast track” permitting services for The Groves project at the former Fred C. Nelles site• Promote National Manufacturing Day in October and associated virtual events• Produce and distribute <i>Growing Whittier</i> as an electronic newsletter• Run “Shop Whittier” ads in conjunction with the holiday shopping season• Participate in economic development webinars/conferences/conventions• Organize outreach to top sales tax producers in the City• Serve as the liaison to local business organizations including the Chamber, WUA, and UWIA & promote “Shop Whittier” campaign• Coordinate adoption of the WUA Annual Agreement and facilitate BIA Assessments for CY 2021• Coordinate and participate in business assistance seminars and/or events• Administer the Greenleaf Promenade Outdoor Dine & Shop Program• Coordinate and administer the COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program in partnership with the Whittier Chamber• Conduct business outreach and visitation

Quarter 3, January through March 2021

- Update the COVID-19 Business Resources Page on the City’s website
- Manage and track the City’s COVID-19 Whittier Recovery Plan stats and make adjustments or recommendations to Council as necessary
- Coordinate service for The Groves project at the former Fred C. Nelles site and assist with grand opening events and promotion
- Promote the California Competes Tax Credit to local businesses
- Produce and distribute *Growing Whittier* as an electronic newsletter
- Update department website and create new content for social media
- Participate in economic development webinars/conferences/conventions
- Organize outreach to top sales tax producers in the City
- Conduct business outreach and visitation
- Serve as the liaison to local business organizations including the Chamber, WUA, and UWIA & promote “Shop Whittier” campaign
- Coordinate and participate in business assistance seminars and/or events

Quarter 4, April through June 2021

- Update the COVID-19 Business Resources Page on the City’s website
- Manage and track the City’s COVID-19 Whittier Recovery Plan stats and make adjustments or recommendations to Council as necessary
- Produce and distribute *Growing Whittier* as an electronic newsletter
- Participate in economic development webinars/conferences/conventions including the annual ICSC RECon event (virtual or otherwise)
- Organize outreach to top sales tax producers in the City
- Serve as the liaison to local business organizations including the Chamber, WUA, and UWIA & promote “Shop Whittier” campaign
- Coordinate and participate in business assistance seminars and/or events
- Revise and update Economic Development Strategy for FY 2020-21
- Conduct business outreach and visitation

IX. CONCLUSION

The City of Whittier recognizes the critical role that economic development plays in maintaining and enhancing the quality of life residents expect. Having experienced the COVID-19 global health crisis this year, the staff will be focused largely on providing immediate relief and support to the business community in the months ahead. While increasing revenue to the City is the primary goal of this Strategy and a critical method of measurement, we acknowledge that it is only one of the many tools the City will utilize to address the quality of life for all who live, work, shop, and play in Whittier. Lastly, the City calls upon our partners, including the business community, residents, business organizations, and other stakeholders, to help in the effort of economic development and continue to strengthen the building blocks that will foster economic growth in the aftermath of COVID-19. The City will continue to provide leadership and resources necessary to ensure that Whittier continues to thrive – we’re all in this together!



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