

Business Vitality in Pacific Grove

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Why it Matters

When I asked residents of our city what some of the top issues are, business vitality rises near the top. It's not simply that we understand the need for revenue to support city services. It's much more fundamental and personal. We want to be a part of a vibrant community. That means life on the streets, signs of activity, and a sense of healthy enterprise. Empty storefronts in our retail areas are discomfoting.

The Situation

Pacific Grove has been affected by the general U.S. business downturn. We have seen some stores close, and a few empty stores remain. Our inns are seeing lower occupancy rates than in the good times of the past. Yet in some ways, we have been more resilient than other cities. Our Chamber of Commerce has been very active in bringing new businesses to Pacific Grove. We still face the general challenge of bringing more people to our streets, both to sustain our businesses, and to create the sense of constructive activity that is part of being a community.

The Issues

- What can we do to support a healthy business environment?
- How can we attract customers, both local and visitors, to our city?
- How do we make it easier for a business – the right kind of business – to get started in our city?

The Way Forward

We have both the need and opportunity to improve our business vitality along two lines. The first is to create a greater attraction to Pacific Grove. The second is to reduce the current obstacles to opening a suitable business.

- Improve the attractiveness of our downtown area. City, business owners, property owners, and residents must be part of the process. The plan for using a recent bequest to the city for an intersection upgrade is a first step.
- Create some memorable, and promotable, point of interest in our downtown.
- Install better way-finding signs. Draw visitors from Ocean View Blvd.
- Understand and communicate the "brand" of Pacific Grove, i.e. the distinctive charm of our city. It's important both to attract visitors and also to keep a focus on the quality of life for residents.
- Update our codes for a more current definition of permitted businesses. (It's not fast food. Our residents are very clear that we want the diversity and uniqueness in our shops and restaurants...and that's what visitors find attractive as well.)
- Simplify the permit process so the city can properly review and issue needed permits more quickly.