

# Improving the Business Climate in Pacific Grove

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## A Direction

It is time for the city to exercise leadership to revitalize our business environment.

## The Situation

A changing business environment plus an economic downturn makes it difficult for businesses to succeed and thrive in Pacific Grove. Businesses will produce about 40% of our city budget, a critical contribution for maintaining our city and city services. More relevant to the citizens of Pacific Grove, a visit to downtown has become an unsettling experience as we watch stores go out of business and For Rent signs go up in empty storefronts.

Our business customers, both residents and visitors, may choose where they can best meet their needs. Today the shopping choices include major centers such as Del Monte in Monterey plus Seaside and Sand City stores. And Monterey is expanding its line-up of upscale hotels. We must continually renew and adapt our businesses to these realities.

## The Issues

- Visitors often bypass the businesses of Pacific Grove as they walk and drive along Ocean View Blvd. enjoying the most beautiful city shoreline in California...for free. We capture little of the tourist dollar.
- Foot traffic downtown is low. Varied hours from business to business undermine the critical mass necessary to draw sufficient foot traffic.
- It is difficult to obtain permits to create or upgrade businesses so they remain competitive.
- Individual businesses acting alone cannot reverse the circumstances that cause our current difficulties. Only by coordinated action can we reverse this situation.

## The Way Forward

It is time for the city to exercise leadership for revitalization of our downtown businesses. The city can initiate a 3-way dialog of city representatives, property owners, and business owners to develop a coherent plan for revitalization. As part of the effort, the city must make it easier for businesses and property owners to obtain permits to open or upgrade.

We also need to establish the distinctive and promotable aspect of our city. A trademark on “Most Romantic” can be a step in that direction. Yet even such a powerful theme must be supported by the character of the town in the visitor zones such as the downtown area. We can learn from our own business leaders and learn from the example of other cities. In the end, we should also retain selected experts who are experienced in these revitalization projects. And ultimately, the city will need to sponsor financing, including the city infrastructure upgrades that must be part of the project.

## Potential Benefits

With a more attractive and relevant business mix in Pacific Grove, we can provide a better experience for both residents and for visitors. And in doing so, we will provide more stable finances for Pacific Grove.