

Business Development Commission (BDC) MEETING MINUTES

DRAFT

MEETING DATE: Thursday, April 22, 2021
LOCATION: City Hall
CALLED TO ORDER: 8:08 AM
MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:06 AM
NEXT MEETING: Thursday, May 27, 2021

Name	Present	Absent
Mike Pincus Chair (Citizen at Large)	X	
Pam Neihaus, Vice Chair (Citizen at Large)	X	
Kara Bowlin (Citizen at Large)	X	
Andrew Scavotto (Citizen at Large)	X	
Erbab Majeede (Business Owner Rep)		X
Jennifer Starkey (Business Owner Rep)	X	
Rebecca Now (Chamber of Commerce)	X	
Tim Delanty (Old Webster)	X	
John Barr (Old Orchard)		X
Laura Arnold Council Liaison		X
Vacant, City Manager Designee		
Mara Perry, Staff Liaison	X	

Also in Attendance
Fran Sudekum – Administrative Support

Approval of Minutes – A motion to approve the March minutes was made by Rebecca Now, Jennifer Starkey seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Commission Member Update – This is the last meeting for BDC Commission Member Jennifer Starkey, Business Owner Representative (Webster University). Jenny has taken a position with the City of Webster Groves as the new Director of Public Affairs and Engagement.

Webster University Video Project Phase II – The rough draft of the spring gardening-themed business video should be ready soon; the semester ends in May. The professor is pleased and should continue working with the BDC for the upcoming fall semester.

BDC Working Group Sub-Committee – Fran Sudekum shared a synopsis of the Working Group’s recent meeting with a list of recommendations which focus on improving the business-to-business communication, coordination, and involvement within each district and between districts. Kara Bowling spoke to the need for community projects for the business owners within the districts to work on together as a means of starting to improve the cohesiveness of each district and strengthen relationships within each district which can then expand to inter-district cohesiveness.

The Working Group is looking to the BDC for guidance on what they would like to do with these recommendations. What are the next steps? See Appendix A for the list of recommendations.

One of the recommendations is to provide an inventory of businesses to business owners within their respective districts so they know who their fellow business neighbors are. Mara Perry explained there is data on each of the businesses housed in two different spaces with different sets of information reflected in each; the business license permit system and information that resides on the City’s website.

BDC Commission Members decided to make the recommendations from the Working Group the focus of the next several BDC meetings and develop an action plan. They also decided to have a couple BDC members attend the next commission meetings of the business districts as a first step to make direct connections with them and share what the BDC is trying to accomplish.

Commercial Vacancy Report

There are 104 visible storefronts in Old Webster; currently 3.8% are empty. In Old Orchard there are 88 visible storefronts (if you extend that visibility past the district boundary at Dale Avenue east to Laclede Station Road); currently 6.8% are empty. Compiled together; 5.2% are empty. See Appendix B for further breakdown and details, pending new businesses in the three business districts, and figures for open and closed businesses city wide.

District & City Update

- All three business districts have finished working on their budgets for fiscal 2022; Crossroads, Old Orchard, and Old Webster Special Business Districts. City staff and City Council will have their budget work session in May. The budget will go before City Council in June for approval to start on July 1st.
- One of the projects submitted in the Crossroads piece of the 2022 budget is for their streetscape project which they have unsuccessfully been trying to get federal funding for the last several years, so they are now seeking funding from the City.
- Construction should be starting soon for the Old Orchard's Streetscape Project. Construction will start at Dale Avenue and proceed west to Murdoch.
- Old Webster has been moving forward with planning their events for this year.
- All three districts have been discussing various parking issues.
- North Old Webster Redevelopment Project – The developer has submitted their request for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP); the full PDF document can be found on the City's website. Anyone can leave a comment or a question about the potential redevelopment project on the City website. There is a model of the developer's proposed redevelopment at City Hall. City staff is in the process of doing their review of the CUP submittal and the earliest a hearing will take place at the Planning Commission will be June 7th.

Next Meeting

- Agenda: Next Steps; BDC Working Group Sub-Committee Recommendations
- Meeting Date – May 27 at 8:00 AM via Zoom.

APPENDIX A

BDC Working Group Sub-Committee Synopsis of Recommendations from 4-7-21 Meeting

The BDC Working Group was put together to address communication and coordination of the various business districts as well as being more proactive in getting businesses to participate in the business commissions, the trade associations, and business community activities.

The business districts are the “pillars” with the BDC as the “roof” over the pillars. Since the three special business districts are the building blocks, making them stronger and more cohesive within themselves first and then turning to the other business areas was thought to be the approach that is needed.

Recommendations

- Provide an inventory of the businesses in each district and share it with the businesses in their associated district.
- Unite the businesses in each area around a specific project for them to collaborate and work on together; something specific that each area needs.
- Top-down communication approach within the City making it part of the overall strategy.
- Disseminate information from the BDC to the District Commissions.
- Disseminate information from the District Commissions to the businesses in their district.
- Add to existing wayfinding signage between all the business districts and business neighborhoods so people know how to get from one to the other.
- Use/establish/create maps, printed and/or virtual on the City website and/or on an app.
- Have multi-district crawls so people get “trained” on how to easily get from one business district/neighborhood to the other.

APPENDIX B

VACANCIES IN OLD WEBSTER AND OLD ORCHARD

April 22, 2021

Old Webster

--There are 104 visible business storefronts in the Old Webster District--64 on E/W Lockwood, 26 on NGore and 14 on Allen Ave

--4 are vacant 233 W. Lockwood (Provolo); 220 W. Lockwood Suite B (Massage Envy – closed June 2016); 75 W. Lockwood (Bank of America – closed Sept. 2019);

-- 38 N Gore Ave – owner is using it as a secondary office space and have permits approved. During the summer of 2019 it was being leased out to the Montessori School for summer camps.

--Note the Ozark Theater was not counted as vacant but had been in the past as nothing really happens there

-- 111 W. Lockwood – approved for a CUP for Le Macaroon – final inspections undergoing in April 2021

--So 3.8% are vacant if you count all currently empty, less if you include ones with active permits. (same as last report from 18 months ago)

Old Orchard (including all the way to Laclede Station Road)

--There are 88 businesses--74 on Big Bend and South Old Orchard and 14 in the Old Orchard Center

--3 are vacant 7939-7943 Big Bend (Medical offices closed 2017?); 7905 Big Bend (Fresh Art Photography closed August 2017); 7982 and 7985 Big Bend – Subaru (closed 2020)

-- 7930 Big Bend – tenant spaces still open

-- 8153 Big Bend – Exterior renovation permits

-- 8157 Big Bend – Occupancy inspection

--2 of the 6 are behind the main buildings or in a lower level not readily visible from the street but were counted

--So 6.8% are vacant if you count them all, less if you include those with active permits. (up from 18 months ago)

If you put them all in a big pile--192 businesses and 10 vacancies--we would be running 5.2% total in these particular areas (up from 4.16% last report 18 months ago). Depending on how you view storefronts with permits and not visible spaces, the rate is something a little lower.

- Union Bagel under construction in Crossroads.
- Le Macaron in Old Webster is finishing up their inspections and maybe April/May.
- DD Mau, a Vietnamese restaurant, will be opening in the former Firenze Pizza location in Old Webster.
- A Wing Stop will be opening in Yorkshire Plaza.

- Zushi a sushi restaurant will be opening in Yorkshire Plaza.
- Amy's Cake Pop Shop & Boozy Bites is coming to Old Orchard.
- Total Access Urgent Care's permits are in and under review.
- Rolling Ridge – request for CUP for event space

ALL CITY BUSINESSES:

October 24, 2019 – December 31, 2019

- 15 Opened "Businesses"
- 2 Opened "Home Occupations"
- 16 Closed "Businesses" (6 were hair stylists who have to get individual licenses)
- 6 Closed "Home Occupations"

ALL CITY BUSINESSES:

January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020

- 41 Opened "Businesses" (12 were relocation or new ownership or expansion)
- 15 Opened "Home Occupations"
- 40 Closed "Businesses" (10 were hair stylists who have to get individual licenses)
- 13 Closed "Home Occupations"

ALL CITY BUSINESSES:

January 1, 2021 – April 22, 2021

- 10 Opened "Businesses" (5 were relocation or new ownership or expansion)
- 6 Opened "Home Occupations"
- 21 Closed "Businesses" (6 were hair stylists who have to get individual licenses)
- 7 Closed "Home Occupations"