



**FROM:** Suzi Pegg, Economic Development Director

**DATE:** May 26th, 2020

**SUBJECT** June Economic Development Report

### **Recommendation**

Accept this report.

### **Social Media/ Marketing**

The priority is on keeping our business community up to date on federal, state and local help. All SM platforms are being utilized on a regular basis with many agencies cross sharing to help keep the public updated.

The EDD, the Chamber and Intown continue to use their partnership to keep local businesses informed on funding available to them and access to relevant webinars on best practices and applying for such funding. In May, the Mayor was featured as one of these webinars to give an update on how the City continues to take a proactive stance in dealing with the COVID- 19 situation.

### **City of Concord Podcast**

This for the most part, has been temporarily suspended at the time being. Past episodes can be found on the website. The PIO did do a 'podcast special' with the fire department on how they are operating in light of the COVID crisis.

### **Measures:**

Economic Development Director Target Visits/Leads for FY2020: 150

Total number of visits/leads generated this month: 27 (via calls, emails or other platforms)

Total for FY2020 to date: 165

### **Updates:**

#### *Business resource pdf*

The pdf housed on the city's website is updated as an as needed basis. An emergency alert is pushed out if any of the information is urgent in nature or time sensitive.

### *Information gathering*

EDD continues to participate in relevant webinars and calls with partners in the City and across the USA/Canada. The City, Intown and the Chamber redistributed a new survey early in May to take the pulse of business owners compared to their status from the last survey which evaluated the early impact of COVID. Response rate has been a little low compared to the last round and we are still gathering information. Feedback from company representatives is that they are facing, like many of us, information overload.

The EDD recently completed a survey of the downtown businesses on foot to evaluate what was open, closed or operating a modified approach to business. In addition she wanted to ensure those she could talk to were aware of the additional funding termed the Main Street Relief Program, because of its tight deadline of applications. It appears the majority was aware and did apply.

In the immediate downtown business district of the 190 businesses she was able to access or see:

- 27 businesses appear to be closed
- 39 have restricted opening hours/operations
- 69 appear to be fully open
- 16 are either vacant or under construction
- 10 are offering only online platforms
- 29 –unsure if they are open or closed from walking past on main street (due to lack of signage on their doors)

This will be repeated in early June to see if there is an increase in those choosing to open fully or still operate under restricted guidelines.

## Discussion - COVID-19: Ongoing



The last report highlighted the immediate economic impact by the COVID- 19 pandemic and how the federal and government agencies were spearheading efforts to release emergency funding to help give small businesses at short term lifeline of funding to help them to operate in the immediate shutdown situation.

As we enter the fourth month of the state of emergency, we recently saw the Governor release another round of funding for small businesses termed the Main Street Relief Program.

All economic development agencies agree that assisting businesses is the highest priority for them which means retention strategies and local outreach. Attracting new investment has had to been deferred temporarily until the economy starts to stabilize and business decisions within corporate entities start to move ahead. A recent national report by Size Up (May 2020) indicate companies are putting site selection/expansion projects on pause and taking a wait and see approach to how the pandemic plays out. Only a small percentage (6%) have cancelled their plans entirely.

Real estate data compiled by Collins International NH Office Market Insight, in Q1 of 2020, reported a 92% occupancy rate and a year-over-year strengthening of the statewide office marketplace before the pandemic. There is, however, universal agreement that the pandemic will change the office market as many companies are having to rethink the way they operate if their employees continue to work remotely from home. This flexibility aligned with new technology platforms to allow people to work effectively remotely will change the need for some companies to lease large office spaces. Alternatively, if social distancing continues to be recommended, manufacturing businesses may have to turn to an increased footprint to accommodate this requirement or turn to new automation in the form of robotics to efficiently fulfil customer requirements and deadlines.

Although it's too early to gauge the lasting impact on the Concord office and manufacturing markets, a silver lining for our community from this COVID-19 crisis is that businesses and talent may be shifting preferences from dense metropolitan areas to places where the population numbers are not as large but where they can still have access to first class schools, medical facilities and outdoor amenities.