



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of San Bernardino Planning for the Revitalization of Its Downtown

The City of San Bernardino has proposed a set of initiatives, programs, and investment intended to revitalize its downtown area.

“When we transform our downtown, we transform San Bernardino.” said Interim City Manager Charles McNeely. “And that time is now.”

The Mayor and City Council were given a preview on June 30 of the initiatives planned to revitalize downtown. In the coming months, the City Council will be asked to approve many of the specific steps.

“Downtown San Bernardino is already a huge economic driver for our City,” added McNeely. “It has the potential to bring many more jobs, much more housing, and significantly more economic activity than there currently is.”

The downtown area accounts for only 1.4 percent of the city’s population, but accounts for 19 percent of the city’s jobs.

“To build upon the opportunities in downtown San Bernardino, the City has assembled a set of proposals that will take advantage of San Bernardino’s strengths,” said Economic Development Manager Amanda Hernandez. “Some are best practices, some are specific to San Bernardino. Collectively, they will make a tremendous impact.”

Among the proposals are:

- Partnering with the Cal State San Bernardino Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship (IECE) to create an Entrepreneurial Resource Center to offer programs and counseling to existing and startup businesses. Since its inception, IECE has counseled and trained nearly 150,000 existing and aspiring entrepreneurs, small business owners, and students.
- Evaluating the feasibility of using Court Street between D and E Streets as a pedestrian corridor to hold farmers markets, arts, culture, and food fairs, and other special events.

- Partnering with downtown businesses and property owners to create a downtown property and business improvement district (PBID).
- Working with Cal State, San Bernardino to develop a downtown satellite campus for select programs.
- Authorizing the San Bernardino Police Department to hire additional officers to create a permanent downtown quality of life team to address safety issues specific to the downtown area. This would build upon a successful pilot project launched earlier this year downtown.
- Working to revitalize City owned property, including the Regal Cinema Plaza, the Convention Center, San Manuel Stadium – home of the 66ers, E Street retail sites, and the former Woolworth Building.
- Conducting a preliminary Engineering and Space Study Plan to determine the next steps for San Bernardino's City Hall.
- Starting a \$2.5 million renovation to the historic California Theater.
- Adding additional economic development staff to focus on the attraction, retention, and expansion of businesses, housing, and employment.
- Contracting with a real estate brokerage firm to market city owned property.
- Developing an economic development action plan to build upon recent planning efforts such as the downtown specific plan and investment playbook.
- Launching a façade improvement program to enhance and upgrade building exteriors along key commercial corridors.
- Developing a revolving loan program to provide emergency and ongoing financing to small businesses.
- Exploring the creation of additional downtown special events to build upon the success of the Miracle on Court Street, Route 66 Rendezvous, Arts Fest, and Vegan Fest.

Some steps to revitalize downtown San Bernardino are already underway. In recent months, the City has:

- Created a \$3 million small business and non-profit grant program. The program, in partnership with the Small Business Development Center, awards grants between \$10,000 and \$35,000 to qualifying small businesses and non-profits who receive training on how to sustain and grow their business. A second round of funding will be available in the coming months.

- Began a proactive review of downtown properties to ensure that owners maintain the physical appearance and condition of their properties. This is a result of recent Council actions to expand the size of the Code Enforcement department.
- Investing \$9 million into the refurbishment of Seccombe Lake Park. Conceptual plans were presented to the City Council on July 19.

“We are already seeing increased investment in downtown San Bernardino,” added Hernandez. “Entrepreneurs, investors recognize that the transformation is underway.”

- Last year, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors voted to consolidate and expand its footprint in downtown San Bernardino with the creation of a 307,000 square foot government center. This project will bring more employees to downtown San Bernardino and create additional demand for downtown business and housing options.
- Several new restaurants are under construction on 5th street. This includes a second downtown Starbucks location, a Del Taco, and a Chipotle. In addition, the Planning Commission recently approved the expansion of the In-N-Out Burger and the construction of a Sonic restaurant.
- Investors recently purchased the historic Heritage Building on Court Street with the intention of renovating the building and opening a new restaurant.
- The owners of 330 D Street where Chase Bank is located recently created the shared workspace Studio D. Among its tenants are the Inland Empire Regional Chamber of Commerce and Music Changing Lives.

One of the biggest economic opportunities remains the 42-acre Carousel Mall property. Currently, the mall is being demolished, with planning underway to build the infrastructure needed to re-develop the property. Ultimately, the City will seek a private partner to develop the site with new housing and commercial development.

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