



LEGISLATIVE PAPERS
CITY OF ISSAQUAH
2021 - 2023

POST COVID ECONOMY:

Business models are already adapting due to the COVID Pandemic. Many businesses are looking for safe communities and commercial real estate for their companies and employees. Issaquah is poised to position itself as such a community.

Economic Vitality-Growth & Development, Housing & Jobs Statement

As a collaborative effort, we must consistently work to support the local economy, local job base and local tax revenue that preserves Issaquah's quality of life. Business matters because it supports everything, we hold dear in our community, and with the City we must put forth our collective efforts to encourage and sustain the generators of jobs, innovation, and economic vitality in our community.

The business community is concerned that there are unintended consequences of the changes to codes and process during the development of the CIP design guidelines and standards. The Chamber is concerned that these changes have become so stringent and costly, economic development for Issaquah will suffer. It is important that there be certainty as well as expedient, efficient and reliable review for those who desire to invest in our community.

The Chamber strongly recommends that the City, the Chamber, and our partners do the following:

- A. **Recruit** new business to Issaquah by supporting marketing efforts that will stimulate a new reputation for Issaquah. One that is business friendly, safe, etc.
- B. **Support** efforts that will assist existing businesses in their recovery.
- C. **Work** with commercial building owners to look for new and innovative ways to fill vacancies, even if they are temporary.
- D. **Be flexible** with zoning and permits to allow short term recovery efforts in all sectors.
- E. **Be nimble** by being bold. Look to the Chamber for our ability to take on and implement projects with less red tape. Utilize our natural volunteer base for their knowledge and expertise.
- F. **Amend** existing statutes to be flexible enough to allow commercial building to be filled (if even if temporarily) as opposed to remain vacant.

NOTE: It is important to recognize moving through the legislative and administrative process; that business owners have limited time to commit to providing input while also running their business. We encourage the city to make the process as proficient as possible.

Development Standards:

- A) We ask that Council formally reviews the CIP dashboard bi-annually, that it requests feedback from Development Services and Economic Development on the type of projects in the pipeline as well as from its developer/broker forums.
- B) If findings are such that nothing or very little is happening, we strongly encourage short-term and times “incentives” be implemented to help facilitate and demonstrate to others the type of re-development Issaquah envisions on its valley floor central core for commerce jobs.

Growth & Development:

The Chamber applauds the City for looking at the big picture, prioritizing what is most important, as well in its planning endeavors. The Chamber encourages the City to look for ways to be action-oriented and innovative to:

- A) **Support** regional opportunities and solutions and coming from surrounding communities that will be of benefit to Issaquah and the Eastside.
- B) **Oppose** changes to the Urban Growth Boundary as it will create additional potential tension for our community and its economic vitality.
- C) **Ensure** the Urban Growth Boundary remains in its current location and provide support to King County’s 4/1 program. This is important to its economic vitality for Issaquah and its tax base, business and in ensuring its regional center vision is successful for the future.
- D) **Ensure** transparency to help the public to understand the pressures/constraints/opportunities the City faces (See Bellevue Utilities “Capitol investment prioritization of projects and the basis for its decisions. Provide information to residents and business owners regarding what changes are happening, when and why.
- E) **Ensure** we have reliable utilities/update outdated systems, and maintenance of the aging infrastructure. Business and residents alike need to understand well in advance what road construction and utility impacts are forthcoming.
- F) **Ensure** fiscal responsibility of our infinite financial resources and seek grant funding/leveraging of dollars through public/ private partnerships when the opportunities present themselves.
- G) **Support** better power through Puget Sound Energy’s Energize Eastside. Issaquah needs a power grid that supports the needs of high tech, web-based economy and as expected by our citizens.
- H) **Support** preserving Issaquah’s aquifer as its main water source. Reduce our dependency on Cascade Water Alliance and cost associated with purchasing water.
- I) **Support** better fiber access for Issaquah. Issaquah needs fiber connectivity/accessibility if it is to recruit and retain business, particularly large corporate headquarters that provide technology-centric and knowledge wage jobs.
- J) **Follow** 5G phone service and look for best practices for its integration into Issaquah.

Housing:

Position Issaquah to be a leader in promoting innovative zoning and product options for housing (both rental and owned) such as accessory dwelling units, micro apartments, dorm-style apartments, etc. Enabling the free market to work which allows the developer to assume the risk

and potential reward will help foster a livable, complete, compacted, and connected town-a primary goal of the Central Issaquah Plan. It is important for a community to have multiple aspects of housing for each demographic and phase of life. Allowing the market to respond to supply and demand is the most effective way to stabilize rental rates over time as well as ensuring our business have access to a local workforce. To accomplish this, we are asking the City to:

- A) **Support** removing the requirement to include affordable housing in every multi-family residential development through inclusionary zoning or mandated units without incentives, as it drives up costs to the consumer and therefore, higher rents are extended to users.
- B) **Support** additional opportunities such as the ToD project and other ways to partner and /or incentivize the type and variety of development needed to accommodate housing needs.
- C) **Ensure** that as the Council receives reports regarding the CIP that it also studies inclusionary zoning without the MFTE. Should housing not follow suit as hoped, we request Council to consider extending the MFTE to all multi-family housing projects in its urban core area.
- D) **Support** alternative styles of accessory dwellings that create affordable housing options fostering support for extended families and allow family members (Primarily older adults) to live independently at a reduced cost.

Taxes:

- A) **Oppose** any local, county, regional and/or state initiatives to impose head tax.
- B) **Oppose** overburdening business with an increase to B&O taxes
- C) **Ensure** a Transportation Benefit District will not overtax our residents and business owners.

Economic Development:

- A) **Support** the implementation and success of the City's Strategic plan and related efforts.
- B) **Support** state and city tourism programs that drive events/ activities/information to a multitude of visitors from individual tourists to conferences and athletic competitions.
- C) **Support** Visit Issaquah's efforts and create a supportive review process that will ensure they remain on track and well-funded to strengthen the untapped opportunities of becoming a year-round destination.

Jobs:

- A) **Support** business growth and development of both new and existing businesses that lead to new living wage jobs.

Community/ Strategic Planning:

We encourage the City to simplify and add necessary staffing to streamline and shorten timelines regarding the permitting process so that Issaquah can compete effectively with surrounding communities. Predictability and consistency impact decision making regarding whether a business will consider relocation to Issaquah.

A city's primary responsibility is to provide services, safety, and utilities. We encourage the City and its council as part of its strategic planning process to remember our primary responsibility

and to be transparent and efficient in the process of creating or revising guidelines and ordinances to achieve the strategic plan.