



## **CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD**

### **BUSINESS TASK FORCE MEETING**

**Wednesday, November 12, 2025 at 2:00 P.M.**

**Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

### **MEETING NOTES**

#### **I. Roll Call/Introductions**

**Present:** Jonathan Cottrell, Michael Palmieri, Kody Christiansen, Joshua Gafni, Leslie Haro, Austin Monroe

**Absent:** Jamison DeTrolio, Clementine Todorov, Craig Susser

#### **City of West Hollywood Staff:**

**Present:** Laura Biery, Paolo Kespradit, Laura D'Ambrosia, Adrienne Rosas,

#### **II. Review Meeting Notes**

September 10, 2025 meeting notes reviewed and filed.

#### **III. Focus Area #1 – Develop targeted business attraction and retention strategies for new and existing businesses, including addressing vacancies.**

*The Task Force received a presentation on the following topics:*

- Economic Overview & Business Support Programs:
  - Q3 2025 Economic Data (Attachment B)
  - City Incentives and Resources
- Commercial Leasing Strategies
- Economic Development Microsite

Laura D'Ambrosia presented the economic data & economic study update (Q3 2025). The current data on vacancy rates and market rents were provided, noting steady office and retail vacancy rates. The full report included trends for all five City commercial districts.

Joshua Gafni asked about the distribution of office space throughout the City of West Hollywood. It was requested for a breakdown of the office space inventory by commercial district be provided at a future meeting .

Jonathan Cottrell requested additional context for visitation data, comparing it to previous years. Laura Biery explained that Placer.AI provides data from 2018 onwards, allowing for a broader perspective.

Laura D'Ambrosia outlined the City's business incentives, including the New Business Tax Credit Program and the commercial lease renewal incentive program. Laura also discussed the WeHo Locals Gift Card Program and the City's partnerships with organizations such as the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and LAEDC.

Michael Palmieri asked about assessments or surveys conducted with business owners. Paolo Kespradit explained the City's approach to business outreach, business retention, and exit surveys focusing on one-on-one meetings and targeted support.

#### **IV. Focus Area #1 Task Force Discussion**

Paolo Kespradit introduced the topic of commercial leasing strategies and a new business development microsite. The City's strategy would be to assist and facilitate leasing commercial properties the City does not own. The City has limited commercial real estate properties that are City-owned and the current inventory of City-owned property is fully leased.

Paolo Kespradit discussed strategies including potential action items to be included in the department workplan and introduced to the City Council. This could include hiring a retail strategy consultant to look at tenant spaces and market trends to develop leasing strategies for commercial districts.

Joshua Gafni asked about the status of a vacancy tax initiative the City considered a year ago. Paolo responded the City decided not to move forward on a commercial vacancy tax.

Jonathan Cottrell suggested looking at risk assessment and risk management, focusing on how many properties are at risk of defaulting on loans.

Paolo Kespradit discussed other strategies including broker incentives to secure leases, a tenant and landlord match program, technical assistance, and a revolving loan fund where repaid loans return funding to the revolving loan fund to help other businesses. He also discussed the implementation of a commercial vacancy registry program to track vacant properties and their rental rates. Joshua Gafni suggested including net effective rental rates in the registry to reflect actual market conditions however Leslie Haro shared about the limitations on obtaining and publicly publishing rental rates from brokers and property owners in today's market.

Paolo Kespradit introduced the idea of a new micro-site for business development, featuring economic data, an AI tool for zoning inquiries, and success stories. He discussed the importance of providing a digital front door for City Hall for businesses to access information and support.

Kody Christiansen proposed bringing back the Sunset Strip Music Festival and the evening farmers/night market to revitalize the area and encouraged task members to attend city council meetings to stay informed and support community initiatives.

Michael Palmieri expressed interest in the low-interest loan program for businesses and the commercial vacancy registry, asking how to contribute ideas to the task force.

Jonathan Cottrell suggested ranking potential action items based on operational and capital costs. Paolo Kespradit explained the budget estimates for each action item and emphasized the importance of providing a mix of support programs to address different business needs. Paolo also explained that the City does not currently own any large-scale commercial developments and instead acts as a facilitator, providing resources but not negotiating leases for tenants.

#### **V. Comments from Public**

Task Force members discussed the importance of community engagement through events like the Sunset Strip Music Festival and night markets.

#### **VI. Next Steps & Adjournment**

Task Force members requested that Staff provide the following data items:

- Create a Task Force email distribution list so members can share ideas between meetings.

- Provide office-space inventory for each commercial district using CoStar, including total square footage and each district's percentage of the citywide office inventory.
- Provide advertised rental rates for vacant commercial properties for the current quarter and include CoStar's standard disclaimer regarding the completeness of its listings.
- Provide the total number of home occupation businesses in the City of West Hollywood, including a breakdown by business type.
- Prepare ballpark budget and operational cost estimates for the proposed programs, including broker incentives, tenant-landlord match, technical assistance, revolving loan fund (with scenario sizes), vacancy registry, and the microsite/AI tool.
- Share prior staff reports, the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce letter, and any prior survey analyses previously completed on the proposed commercial vacancy tax.
- Create a pop-up guide for businesses and evaluate options to extend pop-up events beyond the current 3-day special-event permit.

The meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. via Zoom.