



July 21, 2020

City of San Luis Obispo - City Council
990 Palm St., San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Mayor Harmon and City Council Members,

We would like to take this opportunity to share our comments regarding the proposed SLO Forward sales tax measure.

Over our lifetimes, we have never experienced a threat as menacing to our lives and livelihoods as this pandemic. But time and again we have witnessed San Luis Obispo pull together to solve daunting challenges.

Now more than ever, we see clearly the interdependence of business, government, community and public health and we must once again pull together and invest in our community and our shared future. It is up to us, not Sacramento or Washington DC, to put in the hard work and commitment to help our businesses and residents rebound and come out the other side stronger and more resilient.

As an organization that represents nearly 1,400 business members, we have thought long and hard about the potential SLO Forward sales tax measure. Since March, we have explored the future we envision for this city - and what it takes to get there - through task force meetings, board and executive discussions, and countless conversations with more than 80 of our volunteer advisors.

As a Board, we believe unanimously that an essential step to achieving the future we want is advancing this SLO Forward sales tax measure at 1.5% until ended by voters. This measure would support long term community and economic health through key investments in local businesses, infrastructure and ongoing protection of our natural resources.

Along with this measure, we must ensure that sales tax generating businesses are offered a seat at the table for oversight, and the identification of long term community investment priorities and reevaluating them every eight years. This can be accomplished through simple changes to section 2.14 of the municipal code

- 1) Add a preference for applicants representing sales tax generating businesses to section **2.14.020**

| Membership and appointment:

The REOC shall consist of five members who are residents of the city. Members shall be appointed by the whole city council through a public application and appointment process. When recruiting members, the city will seek members that:

- represent a sales tax generating business
- have professional experience with finance or budgeting
- have experience with municipal accounting

- 2) Add a section to **2.14.040 | Powers and duties** to identify Long Term Community Priorities every eight years:

E. Long Term Community Investment Priorities. Every eight years, the REOC shall meet for the purpose of recommending Long Term Community Investment Priorities to the city council regarding the spending of revenue generated by the essential services measure. The REOC shall take into consideration the input provided by residents and community members, approved elements of the general plan, the purpose of the essential services measure, and the amount of revenue projected to be available during the coming fiscal years, in making its recommendations to the council.

As there is not a predetermined sunset of the tax, the periodic identification of investment priorities is key to ensuring continued accountability and enabling the community to come together to reevaluate long term goals.

We believe these actions will ensure that the funds are put towards their intended use, that the community is engaged on spending priorities, and that the City's long-term financial health is continually evaluated.

When we imagine the future of San Luis Obispo, we see a place that ignites creativity, celebrates diversity and spurs innovation; a place where people work together from across the region to tackle shared challenges, drive economic growth and preserve our natural resources.

This measure can be instrumental in achieving that vision if we devote revenue to helping businesses and residents rebounded from the pandemic in the near term and invest in capital improvements, provide for clean and safe neighborhoods, prioritize open space, and support our local economy in the long term.

We believe that this vision is possible if we – our elected leadership, the residents and the business community - collectively come together to achieve it.

Sincerely,



Hillary Trout
2020 SLO Chamber Board Chair



Jim Dantona
SLO Chamber President/CEO