



February 2, 2021

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

Subject: City Budget Goal Setting Process 2021-23

Dear Mayor Harmon and Council Members:

For your consideration, the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors respectfully submits our recommendations for the City's 2021-23 Major City Goals. These key business community priorities were determined after extensive work, discussion and evaluation by multiple Chamber committees and our Board, involving more than 80 business leaders and representing 1,300 businesses and their 35,000 employees.

Informed by the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Community & Economic Recovery** must be our highest priority and we need to recover with the City's core values of 'civility, sustainability, diversity, inclusivity, regionalism, partnership, and resiliency' in mind. To that end, we are advocating for the following Major City Goals:

- Economic Development & Business Support
- Housing & Homelessness
- City Fiscal Sustainability & Responsibility
- Climate Action & Resilience
- Transportation Infrastructure
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

These goals are naturally intertwined so we urge you to prioritize work programs that address areas of overlap to help our city recover efficiently and responsibly. We know that smart economic development advances diversity, equity & inclusion; that addressing housing and homelessness supports small business success; that investing in transportation infrastructure will improve our quality of life while getting us closer to achieving our climate action goals; and that a fiscally sound City is truly in the best interest of all residents.

The pandemic and its final effects on individuals and communities is yet to be understood, so we implore you to budget conservatively and ensure that the City is positioned to support our community through continued closure and hopeful reopening. Our specific recommendations for the City's investment of time, money and resources during the 2021-23 budget cycle include:

- Dedicate significant funding to support more rapid economic and cultural rebound when safe.
- Make pilot programs such as parklets, additional bike infrastructure, and tenant improvement programs permanent.
- Invest in infrastructure that will unlock opportunities to build more homes, move around more safely, and decrease our carbon emissions.
- Responsibly pay down the City's unfunded liabilities, including the payments previously planned for 2020.

- Prioritize regional coordination and investment to address homelessness through proven methods including the creation of permanent supportive housing, expanding the role of social workers and mental health professionals, and exploring proven programs such as Built for Zero.
- Support the creation of homes of all types through increased density and height where appropriate, measuring and setting goals for permit processing, and activating public private partnerships.
- Create a diversity, equity and inclusion strategic plan as recommended by your DE&I taskforce.
- Help spur innovation and entrepreneurship with a specific focus on BIPOC and LGBTQ+ businesses as well as private sector innovations to address climate resilience.

The pandemic has shown us just how possible change, speed and flexibility really are. During this incredibly disruptive and uncertain time, we have been inspired by the innovation, creativity, grit and tenacity shown by so many businesses, individuals, and the City itself, as we have all worked to keep our heads above water while keeping our community safe.

We encourage you to continue in this vein as you evaluate City operations, facilities and ‘the way things have always been done.’ What would it look like if a portion of staff continued to work from home on a part or full time basis? What processes can be digitized to increase accessibility, speed and accountability? How can existing land, buildings, parks and streets be rethought to provide the greatest community benefit? Can we pilot these changes quickly and with minimal investment to allow for experimentation, broader feedback and ultimately a better result?

Thank you for your consideration and for inviting input from the business community. It is more important than ever to actively create the future we seek and we look forward to working together to achieve a healthy, sustainable and prosperous economic future for those who live and work here.

Sincerely,



**Jessica Steely**  
2021 Board Chair  
San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce