



CITY OF  
**CHULA VISTA**

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**COVID-19  
180-DAY ECONOMIC  
RECOVERY PLAN**  
**MAY 5, 2020 – NOVEMBER 2, 2020**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

*Adopted by the City Council May 5, 2020  
Updated August 19, 2020*



## COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

To meet the moment, address economic challenges and provide support to Chula Vista businesses, Economic Development staff has drafted a 180-Day Economic Recovery Plan. This plan will continuously be updated to allow ultimate responsiveness from the City and flexibility for determining the best course of action in the future as the pandemic and economic impact evolve. This plan will include a recovery program of local resources to focus on local businesses which are the backbone of Chula Vista's economy.

The plan will be re-evaluated often in response to the current state of evolving events related to the pandemic.

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**Small businesses are the backbone of Chula Vista's economy. 95% of local businesses have 10 or fewer employees.**

*Source: HdL 2020 Business License Data*

*Pictured above: Novo Brazil in Otay Ranch Town Center (gathering pre-COVID-19)*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CORE TENETS OF THE PLAN

The 180-Day Economic Recovery Plan will be updated periodically with new actions and status updates on the previously identified actions. As time and the pandemic evolves, the five overarching core tenets of the plan will remain unchanged. The plan will provide assistance in the following five identified areas:



### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

In addition to federal and state financial assistance, several local programs are available to provide financial assistance to Chula Vista businesses. Local financial assistance is available through the Small Business Relief Fund, the On-the-Job Training Program, the Direct Financial Assistance Loan Program for small businesses, the TechHire Job Training Program and the Restaurant Loan Program.



### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

City staff and local partners will continue to provide technical assistance to businesses. Technical assistance is provided through city communications, business assistance and concierge services, technical assistance for federal and state programs, an economic recovery survey and industry working groups.



### MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Businesses need assistance in marketing and promoting their operations now more than ever. Staff is prepared to help small businesses with marketing and promotion through the development and launch of a community-wide business support marketing campaign. Local marketing will reinforce the importance of shopping, dining and staying local to support Chula Vista.



### BIZ FRIENDLY CITY POLICIES (CUT RED TAPE)

City policies and programs have been reviewed and staff is proposing a myriad of changes that will encourage a more business friendly environment that will minimize additional costs, burdens and barriers to re-entry to do business in Chula Vista.



### CONTINUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CATALYST PROJECTS

The progress achieved to-date working on the Bayfront, Millenia, University-Innovation District and revitalizing Third Avenue cannot be halted due to COVID-19. The completion of these projects all offer significant economic gain for Chula Vista and staff will continue moving these projects forward.

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## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

In addition to federal and state financial assistance, several local programs are available to provide financial assistance to Chula Vista businesses. Local financial assistance is available through the Small Business Relief Fund, the On-the-Job Training Program, the Direct Financial Assistance Loan Program for small businesses, the TechHire Job Training Program and the Restaurant Loan Program. These programs are summarized below.

### **Small Business Relief Fund**

In partnership with the City of San Diego, a \$6.1 million Small Business Relief Fund was established. The \$6.1 million is inclusive of a \$2.1 million Regional Revolving Loan Fund that businesses in Chula Vista and San Diego were eligible to compete for. A total of 3,200 applications were submitted, of which 273 were from Chula Vista businesses. Regional revolving loans range from \$10,000-\$20,000 with interest rates as low as 2.5% with no payments due and no interest accrued for the first six months of the loan term. Loan terms are anticipated to range between three to four years. Funding is limited and has already been exhausted. There have been a total of 20 Chula Vista businesses who have been asked to submit documentation demonstrating they are experiencing economic hardship due to COVID-19 so that they may be advanced to the next stage of the Revolving Loan Fund review process. Chula Vista applications are being reviewed by Economic Development staff with assistance from the South County Economic Development Council.

*August Status Update: Five Chula Vista businesses have received funding thus far. The Small Business Relief Fund still contains approximately \$90,000 in funding and additional Chula Vista businesses may be selected.*

### **On-the-Job Training Program**

OJT helps offset the cost of hiring and training employees by reimbursing employers up to 50% of a new hire's hourly wage for a maximum of 1,040 hours. This would be a helpful resource to businesses to apply for prior to reopening their business post-COVID.

*August Status Update: This resource continues to be shared with business contacts looking to re-hire and has been shared via newsletters and on the Economic Development webpage.*

### **Direct Financial Assistance Loan Program for Small Businesses**

Staff is currently working with the Housing Division on the update of their Consolidated Plan to program approximately \$820,000 in CDBG and CDBG-CV funds for COVID-19 related response and recovery. \$600,000 of the \$820,000 is proposed for direct assistance to small businesses. Staff will create a direct assistance loan program and is considering forgivable loans with conditions. Staff is considering structuring the loan program to benefit restaurants because they employ the highest number of people and offer the greatest potential return on our local investment, in that they typically generate about \$40,000 annually per location in normal operations. The program would prioritize funding for smaller "mom-and-pop" restaurant locations, of which there are approximately 140 in the City. The restaurant industry has different challenges than

retail because of their high restart costs associated with buying all new inventory, PPE, hiring and training.

*August Status Update: On July 14, 2020 the Chula Vista City Council approved the Chula Vista CARES Small Business Grant Program, a \$1.5 million dollar grant program to assist small businesses who experienced business interruption caused by the required closures due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. More than 400 applications were received and staff is currently in the process of reviewing applicant eligibility.*

### TechHire Job Training Program

Staff is coordinating with the San Diego Workforce Partnership on a Chula Vista TechHire Program. TechHire is part of a nationwide movement to level the playing field for tech jobs and matches talent with internships and/or employment opportunities in computer programming, IT network and support, multimedia and design, analytics and all other tech fields, such as robotics. Participants will receive access to career coaches and job leads, career-readiness preparation and other resources for internships or paid work experiences. TechHire is a program in alignment with the City's Inclusive Economic Development vision. \$200,000 of the \$820,000 CDBG/CDBG-CV allocation is programmed for the TechHire Job Training Program.

*August Status Update: This allocation was approved on August 4 in the Housing Division's CDBG Spending Plan. Staff is coordinating with the Housing Division on establishing a subrecipient agreement for the TechHire Program.*

### Restaurant Loan Program

South County Economic Development Council (SCEDC) is offering one-time, zero interest loans up to \$5,000 to South Bay restaurants to assist in staying open and continuing to serve food. To-date, 20 restaurants have been awarded loans from SCEDC and seven are Chula Vista restaurants. 15 applications are still being processed.

*August Status Update: At the last update provided by SCEDC, a total of seven (7) Chula Vista restaurants were awarded funding from the SCEDC Restaurant Loan Program.*



*Mangia Italiano, pictured at left, is one of seven local restaurants who have been awarded funding from SCEDC's Restaurant Loan Program thus far.*

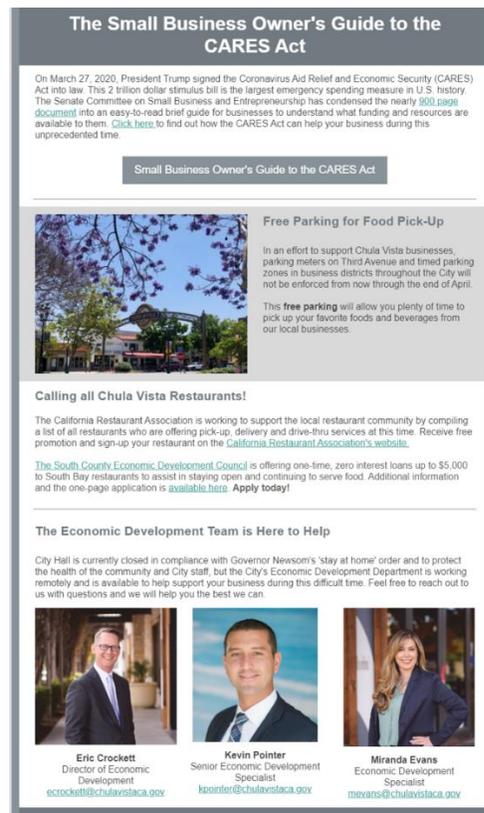
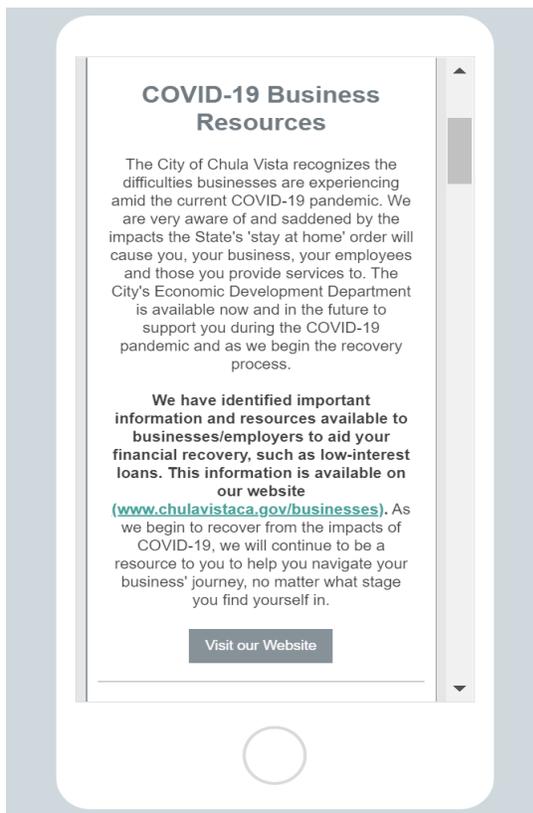
## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

City staff and local partners such as SCEDC and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) will continue to provide technical assistance to businesses. Technical assistance is provided through city communications, business assistance and concierge services, technical assistance for federal and state programs, an economic recovery survey and industry working groups. These forms of technical assistance are outlined below.

### City Communications to Businesses

Following Governor Newsom’s Stay at Home Order, Economic Development staff expeditiously created a webpage with business resources specific to the crisis. This webpage is updated as new programs and funding opportunities become available. Staff has also begun sending out timely email newsletters via Constant Contact to business license holders with pertinent information, updates and resources. Five campaigns have been sent as of the writing of this report which has included 50,454 sent emails with an average open rate of 46%. The standard open rate for email campaigns is 15-20%.

**August Status Update:** Staff has continued to send out pertinent information via email to businesses while being mindful to not bombard them. In recent weeks, the majority of e-communication to businesses has been centered around advertising the Chula Vista CARES Small Business Grant program.



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## Businesses Assistance and Concierge Services

Economic Development staff continues to provide business assistance to inquiries received through the website and email. As of the writing of this report, approximately 60 web requests have been responded to. Concierge services and support are also still provided to applicants moving through the discretionary permitting process.

*August Status Update: Staff continues to assist hundreds of businesses through inquiries received through the website and email.*

## Technical Assistance for Federal and State Programs

Economic Development staff is allocating \$20,000 of CDBG/CDBG-CV funds to SCEDC to assist the business community navigate the nuances of the state and federal funding application processes.

*August Status Update: This allocation was approved on August 4 in the Housing Division's CDBG Spending Plan. Staff is coordinating with the Housing Division on establishing a subrecipient agreement with SCEDC.*

## Economic Recovery Survey

In partnership with SCEDC, [an economic recovery survey](#) has been created to gain data on anticipated recovery timing across sectors and to continue to have a feedback loop with small businesses to understand their needs. Staff has sent this survey out to over 10,000 email addresses and has also provided the link to the Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce and Third Avenue Village Association (TAVA) requesting they distribute the link to their business members.

*August Status Update: In addition to working with SCEDC on their South County survey, staff was successful in utilizing their own business contacts and networks to administer a survey to Chula Vista small business owners and received nearly 600 responses.*

## Industry Working Groups

Per a suggestion from City staff, SCEDC has agreed to provide their leadership and expertise to convene virtual working groups in the restaurant, retail and hotel/tourism industries. These working groups will be facilitated by SCEDC and attended by city staff to listen to and assist businesses as we move towards economic recovery. The working groups will also provide an arena for local support, connection and collaboration within industries. These working groups are planned to begin in May. Staff has also contacted TAVA and the Chula Vista Chamber regarding conducting working groups with their memberships as well.

*August Status Update: SCEDC held working groups in March, April and May. The Chamber is holding monthly working groups for multiple industry groups. TAVA held working groups once. Staff attends as available to provide updates.*

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## **MARKETING AND PROMOTION**

Businesses need assistance in marketing and promoting their operations now more than ever. Economic development staff has reached out to local businesses to seek their input on what services and assistance would be valuable as they start to re-open post-COVID. The majority of businesses surveyed have requested assistance from the city with marketing and promotion of their business and services. Staff is prepared to help small businesses with marketing and promotion through the development and launch of a community-wide business support marketing campaign and local business promotion and marketing with the Colu App. These programs will reinforce the importance of shopping, dining and staying local to support Chula Vista.

### **Community-wide Business Support Marketing Campaign**

Staff plans to launch a community-wide business support marketing campaign to promote the importance of shopping, dining and staying local and the importance of unity within the community during the COVID-19 crisis and throughout our economic recovery. The campaign is intended to tell the personal stories of local business owners, humanize their business and encourage local patronage. Economic Development staff recommends this campaign be an extension and expansion of the THIS is Chula (#THISisChula) campaign and will coordinate this effort with the Communications team.

*August Status Update: Staff has contracted with JPW Communications, a marketing and communications firm with economic development and municipal experience, to create a marketing campaign. Staff is currently coordinating with JPW to execute a contract on the logistics of the campaign including creation of the framework and implementation timeline.*

### **Local Business Promotion and Marketing with Colu App**

Staff explored options and associated costs and has selected Colu for a six-month pilot program for \$15,000 under the City Manager's signatory authority. Colu is a smart city technology designed to incentivize and gametize civic engagement using a unique City Coin that can be redeemed. The first campaign with Colu will be targeted at promoting local businesses and fueling the local economy. Staff anticipates being able to launch the app in approximately 90 days. Following the conclusion of the six-month pilot program, staff will analyze Colu's ROI and decide whether or not to continue use of the app as a tool for economic recovery and small business support. Chula Vista will be the first city in California to use this smart city technology.

*August Status Update: After conducting a thorough evaluation, staff has elected not to move forward with implementation of the Colu app. This decision was based on the cost prohibitive nature of the application following the end of the 6-month pilot program and concerns over the lack of sustainability and quantifiable impact of the application. In lieu of pursuing this, staff has redoubled efforts dedicated to the community-wide marketing campaign.*

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## **BUSINESS FRIENDLY CITY POLICIES**

City policies and programs have been reviewed and staff is proposing a myriad of changes that will encourage a more business friendly environment that will minimize additional costs, burdens and barriers to re-entry to do business in Chula Vista.

### **Prioritize Tenant Improvement Permits**

Staff recommends prioritizing TI permits over the production of housing in order to support and encourage new businesses opening and doing so quickly. Businesses may need to process TI's quickly in order to comply with appropriate social distancing guidelines like the removal or relocation of bars, booths, installation of pony walls and other barriers or improvements.

*August Status Update: Staff has continued to assist with the on-time and expedited processing of TI's for businesses to be able to open during this especially difficult time.*

### **Eliminate Transportation Development Impact Fees for Change of Use of an Existing Structure**

This proposed change would reduce costs for new businesses re-using an existing structure.

*August Status Update: Staff is continuing to explore this option with Development Services.*

### **Temporary Deferral of Sewer Capacity Fees**

A deferral of sewer capacity fees would provide businesses, mostly restaurants but some manufacturing facilities, with additional time to pay their sewer fees to create an opportunity to direct their resources towards other, more critical, expenses. Fees would still need to be paid at the end of a determined period of time.

*August Status Update: Staff is continuing to explore this option with Engineering.*

### **Extend Fee Deferral Program for Community Facilities District No. 17-1 (Western Chula Vista DIF Financing Program)**

Staff recommends extending CFD No. 17-1 for another 60 months. This would allow the continued deferral of fees for all high-density, commercial and industrial developments in western Chula Vista.

*August Status Update: Staff is continuing to explore this option with Development Services.*

### **No Proactive Enforcement of the Sign Ordinance (CVMC Chapter 19.60)**

Allow operational restaurants and other essential businesses to post large signs and banners and or/additional signs to advertise their services. Once non-essential businesses are permitted to open, this would also apply to them. In the interest of

promoting businesses, there will be no proactive enforcement on the sign ordinance for 90 days.

*August Status Update: Proactive enforcement of the sign ordinance continues to not be enforced for businesses.*

### **Business Encroachment into the Right-of-Way When Feasible**

Staff is analyzing safe ways to allow queuing outside of businesses to maintain social distancing inside and outside the storefronts. When safe and feasible, this could also potentially allow restaurants and other businesses to enlarge their operating space in order to accommodate more patrons using appropriate social distancing. For example, allowing businesses to utilize parking in front of their businesses for seating and queuing of the public may allow proper social distancing protocols while assisting in occupancy loads. As we continue to work with businesses along Third Avenue and within our various shopping centers, we need to allow flexibility for them to secure space outside of their business for queuing or dining which could be monitored through a no-fee permit. Staff is coordinating with Engineering and Development Services to find appropriate methods as there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Staff is also exploring the “slow street” concept per SANDAG guidance which would allow the temporary closure of streets to create additional space for pedestrians to maintain social distancing.

*August Status Update: On July 14, 2020 expanded outdoor operations for businesses was formalized through the approval process for temporary right of entry license agreements. This process allows businesses to operate outdoors on public property on Third Avenue only. Also on July 14, 2020, the City Council approved the weekly weekend closure of Third Avenue to allow businesses to expand operations into the street as done across the nation and locally in business improvement districts such as the Gaslamp District and Little Italy. The TAVA Board recently decided that they do not wish to continue with the closure of Third Avenue and the last day for the closure will be August 30, 2020.*

*On July 29, 2020 the City Manager, acting as Director of Emergency Services, issued an Emergency Order to allow the outdoor operation of eligible businesses, and established operating standards, on private property. Qualified business types include salons, barber shops, gyms, fitness centers, spas, nail salons, massage and tattoo parlors, restaurants, bars, wineries and breweries that serve alcoholic drinks only as part of meal compliance with the Council of San Diego Order of the Health Officer and Emergency Regulations. Qualified businesses must have a valid City of Chula Vista business license to operate outdoors.*

### **Free Parking on Third Avenue and along Commercial Corridors**

Continue the extension of free parking through August 3, 2020 to incentivize patronage to businesses.

*August Status Update: Free parking on meters and in City-owned lots has been in place since May 6, 2020. This will be continued through September 30, 2020 and then evaluated on a month-by-month basis thereafter.*

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## Advocacy for Businesses to the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control

Staff will advocate to the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) to support businesses adding outdoor dining in compliance with social distancing protocols to be allowed to serve alcohol outside and to expedite the approval process. This advocacy is anticipated to come in the form of a letter from the Mayor or City Manager requesting approval for all restaurants.

*August Status Update: Shortly after the approval of this plan in May, ABC announced they would be taking a proactive approach in relaxing their restrictions and regulations on alcohol serving establishments. As a result, staff did not need to provide advocacy for businesses on that front. At present, businesses can easily expand their operations outdoors including serving alcohol. Alcohol to-go sales are also still permitted.*

## Coordination with Utility Providers on Payment Plans

[SDG&E will waive late payment fees](#) and will not disconnect service for business customers experiencing financial hardship and unable to pay their gas and electricity bills. Businesses are encouraged to contact the SDG&E Contact Center at 1-800-411-7343 for more information and to make late payment arrangements. Staff has begun conversations with SDG&E regarding payment plans without interest which would assist businesses with avoiding ballooning fees on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, [Sweetwater Authority](#) is currently suspending water shutoffs for failure to pay water bills. [Otay Water District](#) has also temporarily suspended shutting off water and is not charging late fees until further notice.

*August Status Update: SDG&E had voluntarily suspended service disconnections for business customers due to nonpayment when shelter-in-place orders were issued. However, as the economy reopens, normal business procedures will resume. SDG&E continues to offer the option for payment plans to businesses. Sweetwater Authority and Otay Water District are both still suspending water shutoffs for failure to pay water bills and have suspended late fees.*

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## **CONTINUE ADVANCING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

The progress achieved to-date working on the Bayfront, Millenia, University-Innovation District and revitalizing Third Avenue cannot be halted due to COVID-19. The progress and completion of these projects all offer significant economic gain for Chula Vista and staff will continue moving these projects, and other essential work, forward.

### **Supply Chain Analysis**

Staff is researching tools and assistance to obtain and analyze local supply chain data. This information will provide data to staff to understand local supply chains and explore opportunities for businesses to buy local and stay local to help bolster Chula Vista's economy and potentially reduce costs for businesses.

*August Status Update: Staff has begun to explore this item by researching and testing supply chain software. Staff is in communication with San Diego Regional EDC on their supply chain work. Additionally, due to findings from the Harvard fellow, staff will work to further understand what businesses comprise our local economy and to work on inclusive procurement policies for the City. Once those are in place, staff will work collaboratively with school districts and other large public entities on inclusive procurement practices to keep local dollars going to Chula Vista businesses.*

### **Social Distancing and Sanitation Protocol Permit**

Staff has created a mandatory permit for businesses requiring the posting and adherence to sanitation and social distancing protocols. This permit will be required immediately for operational essential businesses and will be required for non-essential businesses to comply with prior to their re-opening. Businesses will be inspected to ensure they are complying with their protocols. Violation of the protocols or failure to obtain a permit will result in a violation of the municipal code. Staff will use the permit and inspection process as an opportunity for a personal interaction with the business to also check on what support and unique needs each business has.

*August Status Update: On May 5, 2020 the process for the Sanitation and Social Distancing Protocol Permit was approved to ensure the safe reopening of businesses and serve as a City-controlled education and enforcement mechanism for businesses. As of August 19, 2020, a total of 1,679 Social Distancing and Sanitation Protocol Permits have been submitted.*

### **Harvard Summer Fellowship**

Through the Bloomberg-Harvard City Leadership Initiative and Innovation track, the City was given the opportunity to have a Harvard fellow provide assistance on a project of choice over summer 2020. City staff interviewed five excellent candidates and selected Irene Liu, a dual degree MPP and MBA Candidate for the class of 2022. Ms. Liu was initially going to be assisting Economic Development staff with their grant award from the National League of Cities on developing an inclusive economic development strategy; however, given the current events with COVID-19, staff and Harvard advisors agreed it practical to pivot and have Ms. Liu assist with COVID-19 response, resiliency and recovery efforts.

*August Status Update: During her 10-week virtual fellowship, Ms. Liu worked alongside Economic Development staff to create an inclusive economic development framework for the City. During her fellowship, Ms. Liu led the following efforts:*

- *Conducted 15 interviews with city leaders and local economic development ecosystem partners;*
- *Created and administered a small business owner survey that received nearly 600 responses;*
- *Created and administered an inclusive community survey that received nearly 800 responses;*
- *Coded and synthesized all survey responses to create a presentation (to be presented to the City Council on August 25, 2020) with recommendations for actionable next steps towards an inclusive economic development strategy;*
- *Provided Economic Development staff with the opportunity to participate in a case study with Bloomberg Harvard on the use of the new City Leader Guide on Inclusive Growth, Racial Justice, and Economic Resilience Post COVID-19; and*
- *Convened a working group of Chula Vista's economic development ecosystem partners to review the findings of the surveys, discuss shared goals and next steps towards realizing a more inclusive economy.*

### **Continued Progress on Key Development Projects**

Staff will continue working diligently to achieve progress on the City's key development projects. These are the projects that hold the greatest economic promise for Chula Vista's future. Recent efforts are summarized below.

*August Status Update: Staff continues to work on the furthering the progress of the below economic development catalyst projects.*

- *Bayfront Development:* Staff is engaged in continued efforts in coordinating with the Port and participating with JEPA to finalize the plan of finance and accompanying agreements for the 535-acre Bayfront Development Project. It is now anticipated that the 1,600 room Gaylord of the Pacific Hotel will break ground in 2021.
- *Millenia Office Development:* Staff is coordinating with Chesnut Properties on a Purchase and Sale Agreement which would enable the 324,000 Think Campus office building, the first phase of the 3M square foot class A office building, to start construction.
- *University-Innovation District:* Progress is being made on several fronts with the University-Innovation District. As of March, the City has entered into a two-party agreement with Impact USA Group for university recruitment services and formal letters of interest have been received from Purdue University and Saint Louis University. Efforts are continuing with developing the overlay zone in partnership

with HomeFed Development Corporation and AECOM. A marketing plan is currently being developed for the University and Innovation District. Staff is awaiting the findings of the CSU capacity assessment study which is still scheduled to be completed by July 1, 2020.

- *Third Avenue Revitalization:* Staff is continuing to offer concierge services to businesses throughout the City and on Third Avenue to continue revitalization efforts.



*Bayfront Development*



*Millenia Office Think Campus*



*University-Innovation District*



*Third Avenue*