



The City of



# Economic Development

## MEETING NOTES

### San Diego Promise Zone

#### Economic Activity Meeting Notes

Thursday, April 24, 2025 | 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM | via Zoom

**Economic Activity Goal:** Increase Economic Activity

#### In Attendance:

**Access Inc.** (Julieta Gonzalez), **Accessity** (Angela Zappia, Juliet Terramin), **Akitso** (Anna Sotto), **BLAC** (TJ Harris) **California Coast Credit Union** (Angel Nolasco), **City Heights Community Development Corporation** (Sylvia Ramirez), **City of San Diego - Economic Development Department** (Viridiana Quintana), **City of San Diego Promise Zone** (Amber Weber, Roosevelt Williams III, Domanic Riley, Oscar Silva, Donika Moreno), **County of San Diego – Office of Equitable Communities** (Kenya Benitez), **Doors of Change** (Nicole Diaz), **Jewish Family Service San Diego** (Melina Mumtzi, Citlaly Gutierrez), **Local Initiatives Support Corporation** (Ivonne Rojas, Karina Valezquez), **Logan Heights Community Development Corporation** (Felix Lopez), **National University** (Danielle Stephen), **Pacific Community Fund** (Maria Bojorquez-Gomez), **San Diego Black Business Network** (Prince Graham), **Sister Cities Project** (Shawn McClondon)

#### Meeting Notes:

##### Introductions, Culture Share, and Agenda Review:

- Sylvia Ramirez welcomed everyone to the April Economic Activity Meeting and shared the agenda.
- The culture share for this month was in recognition of **Earth Day** and asked participants, “How have you made your business or business shopping more sustainable?”

##### Partner Announcements:

- **Julieta Gonzalez:** There will be a multicultural fair and parade in Linda Vista on April 26, 2025, from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. This free family-friendly event will include a grand parade, kids’ zone, carnival rides, and food and retail vendors.
  - [Linda Vista Multicultural Fair](#)
- **Danielle Stephen:** On May 9, 2025, from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., National University will be holding the grand opening for its Nest Healthy Learning Center. The Nest Center will provide personalized services and support, including childcare by the Toby Wells YMCA. The Nest will also house The Sanford Harmony Family Clubhouse, The Veteran and

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Military Community Center, and The Navigator Innovation Studio. You can RSVP at the link below.

- o [RSVP Here](#)
- **Sylvia Ramirez:** City Heights Community Development Corporation will be holding their Khmer New Year Festival this weekend at Colina Del Sol Park. This free and fun cultural event will feature religious ceremonies, live music from traditional and modern bands, local artists and cultural performances, food, traditional games, dances, raffle prizes, and more. Limited parking is available, so get there early. The hours the festival will be held are listed below.
  - o **April 26:** 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
  - o **April 27:** 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- **Angela Zappia & Juliet Terramin:** On May 13, 2025, from 5 p.m. – 8 p.m, Accessity will be holding its Support & Sip fundraiser at Mujeres Brewhouse. Attendance at this casual event is free, and ample street parking is available. Donations are encouraged during event registration, as your support will help more entrepreneurs along their small business journey! Drinks and food will also be available for purchase, including beer, non-alcoholic drinks, Micheladas, and Mexican cuisine from [Las Tias Food Truck](#). You can register for the event below.
  - o [Register here.](#)
- **Felix Lopez:** Logan Heights Community Development Corporation (LHCDC) will be holding a community clean-up in Sherman Heights on May 3, 2025, from 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Trash picking tools and gloves will be provided to all volunteers. Volunteers will meet at Sherman Height Community Center. If you're interested in volunteering, you can sign up at the link below.
  - o [Sign up here.](#)
- **Domonic Riley:** Kitchens For Good has launched their new **Microenterprise Program**. This program supports early-stage food entrepreneurs in San Diego County that are interested in starting a food-based small business or expanding on an already established small business. Benefits of the program are free access to commercial kitchen space, business workshops, transportation assistance, opportunities to promote food products, one-on-one advising, and more! Requirements for the program are that you must be a resident of San Diego County, be low-to-moderate income, and face barriers to traditional employment. If interested, you can apply at the following link:
  - o [Microenterprise Online Application](#)
- **Roosevelt Williams III:** The County of San Diego is updating its procurement policies and practices and would like your input. The County will be holding stakeholder meetings on April 28, 2025, at 1:00 pm to best decide how to make it easier for small minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned businesses, and non-profits to successfully bid for County procurement opportunities. If you would like to participate in this meeting or future meetings, you can find them on the Engage San Diego page. You can find a registration link for the April 28 meeting below, as well as links for targeted stakeholder meetings for those who are interested in attending.

- o [Register for April 28 County Procurement Policies Meeting](#)
- o [Veteran Focused Stakeholder Meeting](#)
- o [Small Business Focused Stakeholder Meeting](#)
- o [Non-Profit Focused Stakeholder Meeting](#)
- o [Engage San Diego – Business Contracting Meetings](#)

### **Promise Zone Updates:**

- Two new Communications Associate VISTAs will be joining the Promise Zone team in May. The Promise Zone is currently interviewing for a Grants & Research Associate and plans to open another position for an Operations Associate in the summer. If you know of someone who would be a great candidate for either of these positions, please let them know about this opportunity.
- The Promise Zone recently launched its new partner MOU process. If your organization hasn't signed an MOU and you did not receive an invitation to become a partner, please email us at [promisezone@sandiego.gov](mailto:promisezone@sandiego.gov) to set up a meeting to begin the process. All official partners will receive a Promise Zone logo. If you haven't received a logo, and you're unsure whether your organization is an official partner, please check the partner page of the San Diego Promise Zone website, which is linked below.
  - o [Current Promise Zone Partners](#)
- We would like to recognize Accessity, Akitso, BLAC, Black Tech Link, and Mission Edge for becoming official Promise Zone partners and supporting the objectives of the Economic Activity Working Group.
  - o [Accessity](#)
  - o [Akitso](#)
  - o [BLAC](#)
  - o [Black Tech Link](#)
  - o [Mission Edge](#)
- The Promise Zone successfully completed its grant reporting requirements for the October 2024 to March 2025 reporting period. We'd like to thank all our partners who assisted us in completing this report. Together, they reported on a sum total of 350+ grants during the Oct. 2024–March 2025 timeframe.
- The City of San Diego's Access 4 All initiative continues to seek input from Promise Zone residents about their internet quality and affordability, digital skills needs, and computer and tablet needs. If you would like to assist them, then you can take a digital survey at the following link or forward it to others in your network if you've completed it previously: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DZMTTV9>.

### **CDFI Presentation: Accessity**

Juliet Terramin and Angela Zappia of Accessity began this month's special presentation on Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) by defining the role of a CDFI and the programs that Accessity has to assist small business owners with building credit.

- Accessity began operations in 1994 with the purpose to make loans more accessible to small business owners throughout Southern California.

- Name changed from Accion Serving Southern California in 2021.
- To date, Accessity has provided small business owners across Southern California with 6,325 loans totaling \$91 million.
  - 3 jobs have been created or maintained per loan received.
  - One local San Diego business that has benefited from Accessity's services is [Maya's Cookies](#).
- Community Development Financial Institutions or CDFIs are lenders with a mission to provide fair, responsible financing to low-income communities that mainstream finance doesn't reach.
  - CDFIs as a designation were established nationwide in 1994 by the Riegle Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act.
  - CDFIs are certified by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and there are 1,400 CDFIs across the U.S.
    - CDFIs can be banks, credit unions, microloan funds, holding companies, or venture capital funds.
    - Focuses for CDFIs range from small business support and community facilities up to affordable housing.
- Since 2016, Accessity has disbursed \$1.23 million in loans to Promise Zone businesses, which have helped create or maintain 235 jobs in the San Diego Promise Zone.
- The CDFI Equitable Recovery Program (ERP) provides \$600,000 as grant capital through the Emerge Loan.
  - Non-grant component of ERP program provides a loan to eligible entities that has 6.99% interest rate and interest-only payments for 6 months.
    - ERP-eligible entities must be located in a census tract that was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and is either a Low-or-Moderate Income Community or Investment Tract.
      - [Definition of ERP located here](#).
  - \$4.1 million has been disbursed through the ERP program to 190 small businesses across Southern California.
- Accessity's Start-Up and Expansion Loans provide rapid loans that are approved and disbursed in 3 weeks for small business owners that range from \$300 to \$150,000.
  - Interest Rate is 8.99% - 14.99% with simple and fixed payments for 12 - 72 months.
    - Veterans and Active-Duty military get 1% discount and \$100 off closing costs.
    - Lenient on credit-worthiness. No minimum FICO score is required
    - Bankruptcy must only be 1-year in the past vs. Traditional banks which require 7 years since last bankruptcy.

### **CDFI Presentation: LISC**

Karina Valezquez & Ivonne Rojas from Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) concluded the CDFI presentation by detailing their efforts to bring economic growth to the Promise Zone through their Diamond District agenda.

- Local Initiative Support Corporations (LISC) have existed since 1979 as a spin-off of the Ford Foundation.
  - LISC is headquartered in New York, but its San Diego branch has existed for 33 years.
- Key programs areas for LISC are Economic Development, Affordable Housing, and Digital Equity.
  - Policy advocacy is an approach utilized by LISC to achieve its key programmatic objectives on the Affordable Housing front (ex. Single family zoning).
    - Since 1988, LISC's Housing Development Training Institute has focused on instructing housing developers on how to construct affordable housing.
    - LISC is looking into conducting a housing feasibility study on the impact of single family zoning on housing affordability.
    - Through the Foreclosure Intervention Housing Preservation Program, LISC helps keep families in their homes.
- In 2024, LISC lended \$8.46 million, which funded the construction of 370 units of affordable housing.
  - LISC has also partnered with Council District 5 on its Housing Opportunities for Public Employees (HOPE) program.
- LISC employs AmeriCorps to assist their full-time staff, which is only comprised of five individuals.
  - AmeriCorps provides a talent pipeline for community leadership, as evidenced by Karina Valezquez who was an AmeriCorps member for LISC in 2016.
  - Ivonne Rojas is the program manager at LISC for AmeriCorps.
- LISC maintains partnerships with Logan Heights CDC and Jewish Family Service of San Diego.
  - They also partner with Access Inc., International Rescue Committee (IRC), Casa Familiar, and the San Diego Housing Commission for the Financial Opportunity Center program.
  - UCSD helps support their Business Development Network initiative, which is composed of groups that serve businesses owned by entrepreneurs.
- LISC has a three-year agenda to revitalize the Diamond District in partnership with the Asian Business Association, Black Chamber of Commerce, IRC, and Media Arts Center.
  - Year 1 will focus on LISC's Inclusive Economic Resiliency Agenda.
    - They are working with Project New Village to promote urban agriculture as part of this initiative.
    - Urban Collaborative Project is a partner on community preparation for disaster recovery efforts.
    - GRID will be providing low-cost solar for home-owners.

## Q&A

The Q&A period for this meeting was unique in that it allowed time for members from organizations not affiliated with the presenter to share their own experience as CDFIs. Maria Bojorquez-Gomez from Pacific Community Fund took the opportunity to introduce her organization.

- Pacific Community Fund (PCF) is located in Pasadena and Chula Vista, and is currently expanding across San Diego.
  - PCF is similar to Accessity by providing loans to small businesses.
- CDFIs were founded in the 1960s and were birthed from the Social Justice movement.
  - CDFIs help individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds avoid having to rely on predatory lenders for capital.
  - The ultimate goal of CDFIs is to help customers become credit-worthy individuals that banks would approve for larger loans.
- The Federal Community Development Financial Institutions Fund reviews all CDFIs to ensure they remain compliant with their mission to be fair lenders.
  - CDFI Fund personnel has instructed PCF to allocate funds due to the potential for unpredictable federal funding in the future.

**Domanic Riley:** “Do CDFIs work with local school districts?”

- **Angela:** “Accessity doesn’t work with schools, but other CDFIs have helped fund charter schools such as the Monarch School Project.”
- **Karina:** “LISC has funded athletic fields for schools through the [NFL Foundation Grassroots Program](#). 12 fields have been created through the program so far. LISC headquarters in New York works on loans for educational facilities.”

**Danielle Stephen:** “Does LISC provide affordable housing loans for individuals interested in constructing ADUs?”

- **Karina:** “LISC primarily provides loans for non-profit development groups, not for individuals adding ADUs to their homes.”

## **Breakouts: Logic Model**

**Group 1:** Identify New Sources of Capital and Promote Business Sustainability ([View Objective 1 Logic Model](#))

**Attendance:** Sylvia Ramirez, Domanic Riley, Donika Moreno, Julieta Gonzalez, Maria Bojorquez-Gomez, Melina Mumtzis, Citlaly Gutierrez

- Group 1 worked on finalizing the revision of Objective 1:
  - Long Version: “Strengthen existing businesses through identifying new sources of capital and promoting long-term sustainability.”
  - Short Version: “Identify new sources of capital and promote business sustainability.”

- **Domonic Riley:** As we wordsmith the objective to make it shorter, we'd like to retain sustainability and access to capital.
  - **Maria Bojorquez-Gomez** asked why it specified capital rather than resources.
    - Domonic explained that educational resources on financial literacy were included in a prior revision, but were removed as many members felt it that it was too restrictive as a primary objective and fit better as an activity, as it was a key component for the success of both new and existing businesses.
- **Sylvia Ramirez:** Asked everyone what their thoughts were on the needs of existing businesses and how we can help make them more sustainable.
  - Domonic brought up that vacant land acquisition wasn't an option, as there was no easily accessible list of purchasable land in the Promise Zone. There were also few if any City-owned properties available for sale.
    - In fact, lack of vacant land is what sparked the discussion around altering Objective 1 to be more realistic.
  - Sylvia mentioned that Logan Heights CDC does a great job of providing opportunities for vendors through their monthly pop-up markets and business registration assistance programs at the Port of San Diego.
- **Maria Bojorquez-Gomez:** Are City of San Diego funds being used to support recommendations on the Logic Model?
  - Sylvia answered that the only funding for Promise Zone projects comes from California Coast Credit Union (unless additional funding is raised, such as sponsors of the Career Expo) and that it is a limited pot of money.
    - Cal Coast funds are primarily used for partner mini-grants, which in 2024 were awarded to organizations including Sherman Cocina to fund projects in the Promise Zone.
    - Not all recipients were official Promise Zone partners; all future partner awards will be for Promise Zone partner organizations with a signed MOU.
- **Maria Borjorquez-Gomez:** How involved are the Small Business Development Corporations (SBDC) in the Promise Zone?
  - Sylvia replied that we work with them the through the Diamond District. Most of the small businesses that City Heights CDC works with are connected to SBDC, but it takes time for trust to be built between businesses and SBDC personnel.
    - Maria suggested adding the word collaboration alongside mentioning resources including partnerships into the revised objective, as they will be important for building trust between small business owners and non-profits that are looking to assist them.
- After group discussion, Revised Objective 1: Promote sustainability by connecting businesses with capital and resources.

**Group 2:** Develop and Attract New Businesses ([View Objective 2 Logic Model](#))

**Attendance:** Danielle Stephen, Amber Weber, Roosevelt Williams III, Oscar Silva, Anna Sotto, Angela Zappia, Juliet Terramin, TJ Harris

- Group 2 worked on finalizing the revision of Objective 2:
  - Long Version: “Develop new businesses by attracting startups, entrepreneurs, and new industries.”
  - Short Version: “Develop and attract new businesses.”
- **Amber Weber:** Is the short version of Objective 2 too short?
  - Danielle and Anna think the short version is fine.
    - They also believe that the longer version would be fine when not included in print material.
  - The remaining participants agreed that Objective 2 was good and did not need any further adjustment.
- **Anna Sotto:** Suggested wordsmithing Objective 1, as she felt that increasing access to resources was missing from Objective 1.
  - Anna also questioned if resources were not important for Objective 2 as well.
    - Amber and Juliet agreed, but didn’t feel it needed to be stated in both objectives.
- **Amber Weber:** Have Accessity and Partnership for Economic Prosperity (PEP) moved forward on the initiative to educate and reduce predatory lending?
  - Angela explained that they haven’t and that it would be better to remove that item from the current logic model until they can come up with a new approach to address predatory lending in the Promise Zone.
- **TJ Harris:** Would like to connect with Amber and Anna to discuss BLAC’s new Accountability Act program.
  - Amber and Danielle will schedule a meeting with TJ to discuss this program in more detail. Anna will schedule a separate meeting.
- **Anna Sotto:** Her final suggestion for an altered Objective 1 is “Promote sustainability by **connecting** businesses with capital **and resources**.”
  - Amber thinks that this is a fantastic revision and will discuss it with the co-chairs once the meeting concludes.
- Revised Objective 2: Develop and attract new businesses.

### **Wrap Up and Adjourn:**

- Co-chairs thanked those who attended the meeting and encouraged them to leave any feedback through the Digital Comment Box: <https://forms.gle/FAbFjw4ZUuAd3Uiy6>
- Submit new activities into the logic model with [this Google form](#).

### **Meeting Conclusion:**

- **Meeting Day for Next Month:** Thursday, May 22, 2025, 10:00 am-11:30 am

- Digital Comment Box: <https://us16.list-manage.com/survey?u=e913b9d30ca18b3436360cf47&id=62c8f5dc2f>