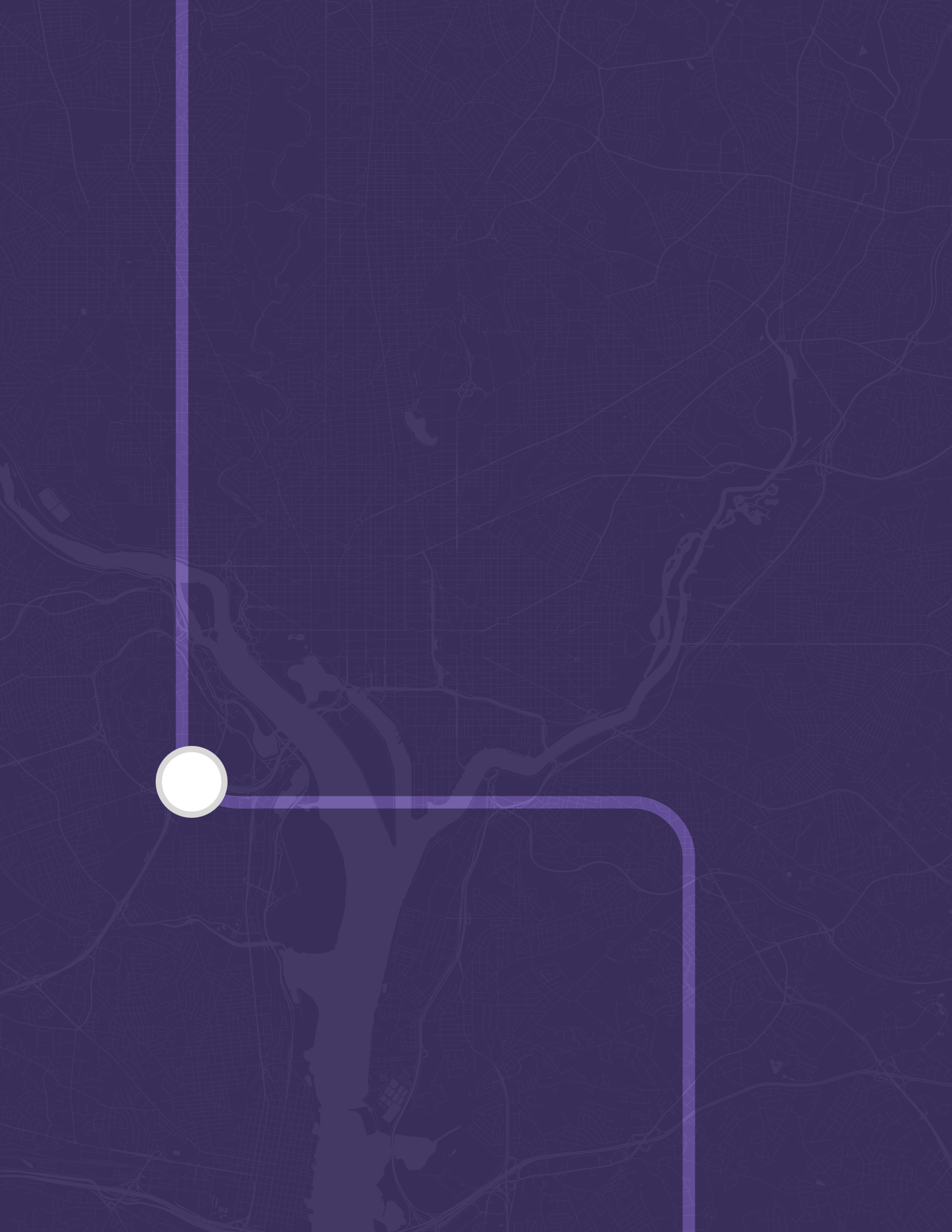




Small Business Support Action Plan



PURPLE LINE
CORRIDOR
COALITION





INTRODUCTION

Thriving Local Economies along the Purple Line Corridor

The Purple Line is a new, 21-station light rail line from New Carrollton to Bethesda, Maryland. The transit project, now under construction, is the first east-west rail connection between Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. It will create new ways of moving through the region -- linking areas now underserved by transit to MARC, Metro, and areas of economic and cultural activity within the two counties.

With this new regional mobility comes both opportunity and risk to the diverse range of small businesses that now feature prominently along the 16-mile Purple Line Corridor. Hundreds of small businesses, primarily owned by immigrants and people of color, and many of which are micro-businesses with five or fewer employees, are those most affected by construction disruptions, increasing rents, and rising land costs.

Many of these businesses serve a much larger role in their communities than simply selling goods and services. They anchor their neighborhoods with locally-driven economic activity, creating jobs and upward mobility. Through food and specialty products, they bring familiarity and the comforts of home to immigrant communities. They help maintain neighborhood identities with storefronts and signs that represent their local customer base.

When viewing the Purple Line transit project through the lens of racial and economic equity, there is a critical need to support existing small business owners and harness the economic benefits the Purple Line could bring. This includes new customers and new interest in historically underinvested communities and coordinating action to prevent commercial displacement that is often the unfortunate result of unchecked development.

If small businesses along the Purple Line Corridor faced challenges before, they now face exceptional hurdles in the wake of COVID-19. Between shutdowns, mandated capacity limits, and generalized fear of virus transmission among potential customers, the small businesses that have managed to stay alive are struggling to keep their doors open. Similar to trends nationally and across the Metro DC region, the pandemic and weak economy have caused significant temporary and permanent loss of jobs and businesses, mainly in the leisure and hospitality, food service, and retail sectors within the corridor.

Purple Line Corridor Coalition Leads a Collective Impact Strategy

There is no single entity that has the skills and capacity to meet the charge of supporting small and micro-businesses to survive these intersecting challenges. Rather, it requires a coordinated approach that brings together the assets and expertise of public agencies, nonprofit service providers, private sector entities, and the lived experience of small business owners.

The Purple Line Corridor Coalition (PLCC) was established in 2013, with its administrative home at the University of Maryland's National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG), to maximize the benefits of the Purple Line for all residents and businesses and to address potential disruption and displacement from construction of the line. Employing a collective impact strategy, the PLCC brings diverse stakeholders together to develop policies and actions leading to sustainable development that is racially and economically equitable.

Since 2019, the PLCC Small Business Action Team has convened regularly to envision and advance a coordinated, corridor-wide approach to small business preservation and growth. Co-chaired by the Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC) and CASA, the group includes Montgomery County and Prince George's County economic development departments and other county staff, small business service organizations such as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and FSC First; neighborhood-based organizations such as Central Kenilworth Avenue Revitalization CDC and Northern Gateway CDC; redevelopment authorities such as Takoma-Langley Crossroads and the Silver Spring Urban District; business associations such as Fenton Village and Long Branch Business League; small business owners; and the municipal economic development departments of the City of College Park and the City of Takoma Park.

The focus of the group's work at the outset was supporting small businesses to survive construction disruptions and neighborhood gentrification. However, with the onset of the pandemic in 2020, individual Small Business Action Team members pivoted to emergency response, while the Team as a unit adapted to the reality that COVID-19 presented a more significant threat than anything the group had previously envisioned. This plan is the result of the group's renewed focus on small business survival in a dramatically changed landscape.

Surviving COVID and Beyond

How do small businesses recover? According to Jill Schlesinger, a nationally-syndicated financial columnist, there are three phases that small businesses and their communities of support must go through to survive the pandemic — Triage, Transition, and Transformation. Most small businesses have been in a cash crunch during the pandemic and have had



to pivot their business practices to respond to public health requirements without much forethought. This has been a continued period of Triage, as of April 2021. As businesses have begun to more fully (and sometimes tentatively) reopen, they have perhaps been adding new business lines, re-hiring staff, and more thoughtfully reassessing their business practices. This is Transition. As businesses look down the road, they face a much different economy where customers have different shopping habits, and redevelopment might change the composition of their customer base. This is where Transformation is required — long-term strategies that will create vibrant spaces for the existing community and attract new clients and customers.

For more details on the foundational research that led to the creation of this plan, please refer to PLCC's 2020 report, *Small Business Support Strategy for the Purple Line Corridor: Recovery to Resilience*.

Significant Existing Efforts

Although this plan lays out a new way of working together, it also builds on a strong foundation of existing small business support activities along the Purple Line Corridor. Two notable and relevant investments along the Purple Line include JP Morgan Chase's PRO Neighborhoods initiative and a US Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant secured through the 2020 CARES Act to support small businesses in the aftermath of the pandemic.

JP Morgan Chase's PRO Neighborhoods investment is a national CDFI lending initiative, with \$5M in capital awarded in late 2019 to support affordable housing and small business preservation along the Purple Line Corridor. The small business component is led by LEDC, PLCC's small business action team co-chair. The PRO Neighborhoods award provides new capacity and resources for intensive technical assistance and lending, which is a foundational set of services that the small business action plan will build on and expand.

The EDA CARES grant, awarded to NCSG in the summer of 2020, initially focused on PPE production and distribution to local restaurants and retailers to support them in reopening and is now focused on building the capacity of local neighborhood organizations to strengthen their voice as trusted partners to local business owners. The EDA CARES grant is setting the stage for these organizations to serve as hosts for holistic place-based management, which is a key organizing framework to ensure coordinated support to small businesses in the long-term.

The Focus of This Plan

There are six communities near future Purple Line stations that have dense commercial corridors and a high concentration of business owners and customers of color, and where

the neighborhoods are disproportionately affected by the legacy of racial discrimination and disinvestment. This plan prioritizes these neighborhoods, referred to throughout the plan as equity areas, where small businesses are most vulnerable to displacement and where increased community investment can drive racial equity.

These areas include Greater Riverdale, communities along University Boulevard including Northern Gateway and Langley Park, Long Branch, Bonifant Street and Fenton Village in Silver Spring, and the Brookville Road Business District in Lyttonsville. There are an estimated 830 micro-businesses within 1/2 mile and 513 micro-businesses within 1/4 mile of these stations.

Because the pandemic and the economy continue to wreak havoc on Purple Line small businesses in the spring of 2021, the plan intentionally focuses on the next 12-15 months, when triage activities are still essential and investments in transition-oriented activities can also begin. Within this initial plan period, the stage will also be set for longer-term, more transformational activities that can boost existing businesses and help new, locally-owned ones to emerge.

Therefore, the PLCC Small Business Support Action Plan is organized into four primary areas of work:

- + Place-based Management, Technical Assistance and Service Coordination
- + Policy, Advocacy, and Education
- + Marketing and Promotion
- + Research and Relationship-Building for Transformation

The first area — focused on services, direct assistance, and management activities across the corridor's equity areas — features the most essential on-the-ground work that provides small and micro-businesses with the technical assistance they need to survive and thrive. This Action Plan prioritizes place-based management to establish the capacity to build deep and trusting relationships with businesses at the local level. This approach is key to advancing the work in the six equity areas along the corridor in the long term. Central to this goal is the establishment of Main Street programs, or related place-based management strategies. The Main Street framework, a program of Main Street America, is a holistic economic development strategy with a 40-year track record of success across the nation, including in Maryland. With a full-time staff person, the Main Street model supports micro- and small-business growth through incremental change that builds community and strengthens local economies.

Policy, advocacy, and education address common, systemic issues across the corridor. By collectively identifying and advocating for strategic state and local policy priorities, the Small Business Action Team will support small businesses to not only endure but successfully emerge from the pandemic.

The marketing work concentrates on essential promotional activities that can help boost both individual businesses and business districts within the equity areas. It also looks at how to structure more business-to-business activity in the corridor by promoting local procurement programs.

The plan concludes with two key sections:

The first describes briefly the three-to-five-year aspirational goals for this work, for which the work over the next year will serve as a foundation. The second lays out how the coalition raises the funds and finds other resources to implement the plan while building upon important existing funds and current efforts of coalition partners.

Place Based Management, Technical Assistance & Service Coordination to More Fully Support Purple Line Small Businesses in Equity Areas

Many of PLCC's Small Business Action Team members already provide some level of service to small businesses along the corridor. The first set of strategies in this plan is geared toward exploration of the applicability of place-based management and the Main Streets model in the six equity areas, and preparing select lead organizations to launch such a program. This section also focuses on expanding and coordinating existing, high-impact technical assistance and lending services that have been a critical lifeline for small businesses both before and during the pandemic.

Strategy #1

Assess and prepare organizations for Main Street or place-based management along the corridor

PLCC will support local organizations to hire a full-time staff person, or place-based manager, dedicated to implementing local solutions in a holistic manner within a defined commercial corridor. By providing constant outreach to area businesses within each equity area, this full-time staff person gains the trust of local businesses and is a champion and advocate for the commercial corridor. Place-based managers may lead business associations, business improvement districts, and Main Street programs. Place-based managers may engage in creative placemaking and manage façade improvement grants, help market local businesses and the district, provide and coordinate direct small business technical assistance that improves business operations, and organize stakeholders and partnerships.

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
<p>Conduct education and readiness activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Meet with potential Main Street and place-based management host organizations in the six equity areas + Conduct site visit to learn from existing area Main Streets and place-based management + Attend Main Street 101 Training & Main Street Now Conference (Main Street's annual conference) + Schedule guest speakers from organizations that were just designated Main Streets to learn about Main Street readiness + Provide capacity building support to place-based managers and training, as needed, to assess and support businesses and their commercial districts 	2021: Q2-Q4	NCSG, interested place-based partners (such as CKAR, Northern Gateway, Langley-Takoma Crossroads, MHP/ Long Branch Business League, Fenton Village, Lyttonsville Business District), City of Takoma Park, City of College Park, LEDC, and others
<p>Engage Main Street Maryland and/or Urban Main Street to conduct Main Street assessments for targeted equity areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Identify which lead organizations are ready for a Main Streets program + Identify alternative place-based management structures for locations that do not currently have Main Streets capacity 	Q3- 2021 Q2 2022	Selected place-based partners, NCSG
<p>Pursue new resources to fund Main Street & place-based management work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Develop proposal materials + Meet with Maryland Main Street program, county planning departments, foundations, and other potential funders + Apply for federal funding opportunities as applicable such as EDA & SBA's Community Navigator program 	Q3-2021 Q2 2022	NCSG, interested place-based partners (such as CKAR, Northern Gateway, Langley-Takoma Crossroads, MHP/ Long Branch Business League, Fenton Village, Lyttonsville Business District), LEDC, SBDC, others

Strategy #2

Coordinate and align small business service technical assistance providers. Provide specialized technical assistance

Intensive technical assistance (TA) can be transformative for a struggling small business. TA, including assistance with becoming incorporated, support with marketing, help with landlord and rent negotiations, navigating construction disruption, and organizing financial information to apply for COVID relief programs and loan pools, has been a crucial lifeline for many businesses along the corridor. However, many small and micro-businesses have been unable to access COVID resources. Beginning in 2021, businesses need assistance to access new state funds (FY22-24) for those impacted by Purple Line construction. Coordinating and strengthening existing TA services is one of the highest priorities of this action plan. Greater coordination will increase efficiencies among service providers along the corridor and help a larger number of struggling businesses than is currently possible.

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Align and coordinate services to small businesses for increased impact and reach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Identify current services offered — including capacity constraints and cross-referral opportunities + Meet quarterly to share information about service offerings and gaps and share the latest knowledge on resources to support small businesses 	Q2 2021 Q2 2022 <i>Meet Quarterly</i>	LEDC, CASA, SBDC, FSC First, NCSG, PGC EDC, MC EDC, MC Business Advancement Center, MDOT MTA, place-based partners (CKAR, Fenton Village, Lyttonsville Business District, Northern Gateway, Langley-Takoma Crossroads, MHP/Long Branch Business League), others
Develop service targets to guide coordination of TA strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Identify baseline number of businesses — both formal and informal -- in need of direct TA (update prior estimates, add data as available) + Select specific service and outreach targets to guide resource needs 	Q2-Q4 2021	LEDC, CASA, SBDC, FSC First, NCSG, PGC EDC, MC EDC, MDOT MTA, place-based partners (CKAR, Fenton Village, Lyttonsville Business District, Northern Gateway, Langley-Takoma Crossroads, MHP/Long Branch Business League), others

Strategy #2

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Expand and coordinate outreach to engage more businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Engage existing small business associations, faith-based or other community organizations connected with small businesses+ Explore opportunities for training and other capacity building with neighborhood-based partners that would expand the ability of PLCC to connect with businesses	Q2-Q4 2021	LEDC, Enterprise Community Partners, CASA, SBDC, FSC First, NCSG, PGC EDC, MC EDC, MDOT MTA, place-based partners (CKAR, Fenton Village, Lyttonsville Business District, Northern Gateway, Langley-Takoma Crossroads, MHP/Long Branch Business League), others

Strategy #3

Help businesses go online

Online sales accounted for roughly 12% of all retail sales nationally at the beginning of 2020. (ILSR) Only 6% of Latino businesses in the DC-Maryland-Virginia metropolitan region have moved online. Given the outsized importance of having a digital presence, numerous Purple Line businesses need help to get their businesses online. At the same time, increasing the digital presence of small businesses is more complex because it includes digital education, establishing on-line payment systems, and maintaining and updating digital tools. The PLCC can build on learnings from other parts of the country. For example, the City of Detroit's Digital Detroit initiative, a website accelerator to help small businesses build online storefronts. The program provides website development workshops and branding to help businesses create their own website. The program includes three months of website hosting.

Strategy #3

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Assess the initial need and select priority, ready-to-start businesses	Q2 2021	LEDC, CASA, SBDC, FSC 1st, and place-based partners (CKAR, Northern Gateway CDC, Takoma-Langley Crossroads, MHP/ Long Branch Business League, and others)
Identify and connect businesses to available support and assistance including trainings and TA	Q2-Q4 2021	LEDC, CASA, SBDC, FSC 1st, and place-based partners (CKAR, Northern Gateway CDC, Takoma-Langley Crossroads, MHP/ Long Branch Business League, and others)



POLICY & ADVOCACY TO BUILD GREATER SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES IN EQUITY AREAS OF THE CORRIDOR

In the past year, legislation passed at the federal, state, and county levels has been critical to help small businesses survive the pandemic period. Going forward, new and revised policies and bills will need to be passed and implemented to help those same businesses successfully emerge from this extended crisis. The Small Business Action Team will coordinate and lead advocacy at the state and local level, and increase the internal capacity of member organizations to advocate on common issues and build a joint policy agenda.

Strategy #1

Advocate at the state and county level for legislation to support small businesses with pandemic-related financial relief, construction disruption relief, and fairness and transparency in commercial leases

This strategy will involve building and maintaining relationships with elected officials, identifying key legislative and budget priorities, organizing small business owners and institutional partners -- and building the coalition's capacity to play a leadership role in policy and advocacy in the long-term. PLCC has already established an Equity Leadership Council (ELC) — a body of local and state legislators who touch the Purple Line Corridor and who advise the coalition on policy and legislation to support bi-county coordination. The Small Business Action Team's policy work will build on the ELC and other central PLCC partnership and coalition capacities.

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Build and maintain relationships with state and local legislators who touch the Purple Line Corridor especially but not exclusively through the convening of the ELC	2021: Q2-Q4	NCSG, CASA, PLCC members involved in advocacy beyond small business; skilled volunteers
Build the capacity of a core group of small business owners to provide input across Small Business Action Plan priorities and offer testimony as needed.	2021: Q2-Q4	LEDC, NCSG, place-based partners (CKAR, Northern Gateway, Takoma Langley Crossroads, MHP/Long Branch Business League, and others) working with business associations along the corridor
Organize with other PLCC partners around policy priorities, including coordinated public communications	Q2 2021 Q2 2022 <i>Ongoing</i>	LEDC, NCSG working with other centrally involved PLCC partners

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Establish policy priorities every year with input from small business action team (including small business owners, business associations and chambers)	Q3 2021 <i>Meet Quarterly</i>	NCSG, LEDC, EDCs, and PLCC Small Business Action Team
Build long-term PLCC policy/advocacy capacity by raising resources for and training dedicated staff	Q2 2021 Q2 2022 <i>Ongoing</i>	NCSG, LEDC
Play a support role in advocacy through existing coalitions, by building relationships with statewide, county, federal, and municipal coalitions strategically aligned with PLCC's policy priorities	Q2 2021 Q2 2022	NCSG, LEDC, CASA, and others

Strategy #2

Engage property owners along the corridor (to influence private sector “policy”)

Property owners are gatekeepers to many of the goals of this plan — redevelopers of existing properties with power over commercial leases, ownership of shared space occupied by small businesses, and influence on a variety of decisions that happen in the public realm and have an impact on local economies. PLCC's Small Business Action Team will engage property owners around areas of common benefit, including efforts to support small business owners to grow their earnings and pay rent.

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
<p>Develop an approach to working with property owners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Develop strategic language & communications strategy to connect with property owners at the level of decision-makers + Identify planned redevelopment that might affect small business along the corridor, to strategically focus outreach to property owners + Identify PLCC members with relationships with development community to engage in one-on-one conversations + Create a roundtable or other means of engaging property owners around areas of common cause 	<p>Q2 2021 Q2 2022</p>	<p>NCSG, LEDC, Enterprise Community Partners, Takoma-Langley Crossroads</p>



MARKETING & PROMOTION ALONG THE PURPLE LINE CORRIDOR

The marketing in this plan is primarily focused on business-to-consumer marketing that can benefit Purple Line-based small businesses at the individual business, commercial district, and corridor levels. Actions for each are tied to the goal of helping to increase customer traffic and business in specific locations and across the entire Purple Line. This first year will also focus on assessing the feasibility of rolling out in year two a business-to-business marketing strategy primarily focused on connecting county government agencies and other large public and private employers in the corridor for a wide range of procurement opportunities.



Strategy #1

Business to consumer: promote and market Purple Line businesses

Small businesses in the equity areas of the corridor do not have sufficient capacity or funds to market themselves completely, and thus the action team has a key role to play to help spotlight individual businesses, promote commercial districts in the corridor through arts, placemaking, and wayfinding, help develop strategies for specific segments of the corridor, and to employ marketing campaigns that can be used effectively corridor-wide.

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Add Purple Line businesses to existing marketing outlets <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Add Purple Line small businesses to popular marketing platforms run by local and regional entities and commonly used business search tools like Google and Yelp	Q2-Q4 2021	NCSG, MC EDC, PGC EDC, MDOT MTA, Place-based partners
Create communications and marketing campaigns to publicize a wide range of Purple Line businesses in the Corridor, to expand customer base <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Leverage the communications capacity of Small Business Action Team partners, including social media platforms and marketing expertise (e.g.#purplelinelove campaign on Twitter)+ Capture and publicize the stories of local businesses and their owners+ and publicize to targeted market segments+ Pitch international cuisine restaurants to popular millennial platforms such as DC Eater	Q2 2021 Q2 2022 <i>Ongoing</i>	MC EDC, PGC EDC, NCSG, MDOT MTA, and other partners.

Strategy #1

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Promote small businesses through arts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Engage artists as partners in creative marketing of Purple Line businesses and shopping plazas + Pilot COVID-safe, small-scale, pop-up space activation to drive traffic to a set of small businesses and build toward long-term community visions + Utilize temporary creative projects as “spaces of rehearsal” to build toward larger ideas like facade improvements, design interventions to support business owners 	Q2 2021 Q2 2022 <i>Ongoing</i> (PILOT BY MAY 2021)	NCSG, UMD Architecture Studio, place-based partners (CKAR, Northern Gateway, Takoma-Langley Crossroads, MHP/Long Branch Business League, and others), MC Planning, PGC Planning
Develop place-based marketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Engage area businesses through focus groups with place-based partners in up to six equity areas to identify existing place-based branding and marketing, gauge interest, needs and ideas for new or expanded marketing and/or branding. + Provide branding/marketing support in up to three equity areas in partnership with local businesses and place-based partners. + Develop University of Maryland Service Learning Project Course with branding expert to take research to action (or something similar) 	Q3 2021 Q2 2022 UMD PROJECTED Q1-Q2 2022	NCSG (with support of a marketing consultant), place-based partners (CKAR, Northern Gateway, MHP/Long Branch Business League, and others)
Explore wayfinding needs within each equity area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Identify signage and wayfinding needs related to Purple Line construction disruptions + Identify signage and wayfinding aspirations to support customers in navigating to local businesses in commercial corridors 	Q2 2021 Q1 2022	Place-based partners (Northern Gateway, MHP/Long Branch Business League, CKAR, others), MC Planning, PGC Planning

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Regional marketing to expand market base in preparation for future Purple Line riders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Create a “Purple Line Coffee Trail” (foods of the world, pupusa trail) or other corridor-wide product marketing campaign. Explore tie-in with bike trails, etc. + Host a regional marketing event to invite new customers 	Q2 2021 Q1 2022	NCSG, EDCs, Place based partners (CKAR, Northern Gateway, MHP, Takoma-Langley Crossroads, others), Cities of Takoma Park, College Park, and others

Strategy #2

Business to business: boost local procurement programs

Both Montgomery County and Prince George’s County procurement programs encourage county governments to buy from local businesses. Yet these programs are sometimes not well known or well understood by micro and small businesses and also present barriers they must overcome. This could also be an opportunity to connect small businesses with other, large-area employers and anchor institutions (e.g., the University of Maryland, Montgomery College, Kaiser Permanente, etc.). Through this strategy, small and micro-businesses along the Purple Line would also be encouraged to connect and buy goods and services from each other, thereby circulating dollars within the community.

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Identify and share existing procurement opportunities for Purple Line small businesses, in collaboration with Montgomery and Prince George’s County procurement offices	Q3-Q4 2021	NCSG, PGC EDC, MC, and other Action Team members
Identify potential anchor and large business partners	Q3 2021 Q2 2022	NCSG, PLCC Steering Committee

Strategy #2

Key Actions to be Taken	Timeframe for Action	Key Partners
Research best practices for increasing opportunities for local procurement with small businesses	Q3 2021 Q1 2022	NCSG, PGC EDC, MC, and other Action Team members
Explore application of best practices to PL, select and begin pilots for promising strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Explore ways to remove barriers to smaller businesses+ Provide support to interested businesses to register and participate+ Examine models for developing “Buy Purple Line Business” website, expanding other existing tools, and creating a search tab to easily find qualified businesses	Q3 2021 Q1 2022	NCSG, PGC EDC, MC, and PLCC Action Team Members

RESEARCH AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING FOR TRANSFORMATION

PLCC's charge has always been long-term and systems-focused, envisioning a thriving ecosystem of small and micro-businesses along the Purple Line Corridor long after the Purple Line trains start running. Because of the uncertainties of how the COVID pandemic and its impacts on small businesses will evolve in the year ahead, the scope of this plan was limited to the next 12-15 months. However, the PLCC Small Business Action Team will use this year to rebuild its vision for a thriving corridor post-pandemic and grow its momentum and capacity as a group.

In the next year, the Small Business Action Team will focus on research and relationship building that enable movement on Transformation actions identified in the PLCC's 2020 report, *Small Business Support Strategy for the Purple Line Corridor: Recovery to Resilience*. Promising practices that the group has identified as priorities for exploration this year include but are not limited to: small business hubs that serve as homes for businesses displaced during COVID-19; expansion of local and state construction disruption programs; expansion of revolving loan funds; shared equity models for small businesses; and commercial inclusionary zoning.

Notable in the list of longer-term actions is a focus on entrepreneurship and informal businesses. The Small Business Action Team identified this as an area for more intensive planning and exploration this year. While PLCC fights to ensure a future for existing businesses, the Small Business Action Team also recognizes the need to foster the next generation of small businesses. This focus will ensure that the Purple Line Corridor continues to support thriving, culturally rich, and locally-driven economic activity, even as the pandemic and the Purple Line bring community change.

The exploration will include research — building on the specialized expertise of the partners leading this work, and the technical capacities of the University of Maryland's National Center for Smart Growth, which serves as the coalition's home. It will also include building new relationships — recognizing that many potential partners are not currently involved in coalition efforts that can bring many of the skills and expertise needed to make these ideas a reality.

The Small Business Action Team will also focus heavily on its operational capacity, which is key to implementing both short- and long-term goals. With a focus on deepening coordination of existing and new activity across partners toward a shared purpose, recruiting new partners to fill key capacity gaps, and raising funds and resources, the group expects to be in a strong position to amplify its impact in 2022 and beyond.

FUNDRAISING & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

This plan represents the ambitions of a dedicated group of entities that are already working in various ways to support businesses along the Purple Line Corridor – and making a commitment to aligning their time and resources around a shared set of goals.

However, in order for PLCC to meet its long-term charge of ensuring the survival of small and micro-businesses in equity areas along the Purple Line Corridor at a time of critical need, new resources must also be raised in support of this work.

PLCC, as a collaborative, requires dollars to support: coordinated technical assistance and lending; marketing of individual businesses and commercial corridors; capacity to mobilize to enact policy priorities that reflect the aspirations of small business owners; and PLCC's central coordination of this large-scale effort.

The coalition requires new resources to implement the National Main Streets model to ensure the long-term capacity for transformative and locally-driven small business support efforts. These additional resources would allow the coalition to help embed place-based managers within trusted community-based organizations in equity areas along the corridor.

The group also needs the time and talents of new partners in this work. Public agencies, philanthropy, grassroots organizations, regional and national nonprofits, lenders, private sector entities, skilled volunteers, and other community champions can help advance this plan in unique ways.

The Small Business Action Team invites potential supporters to reach out and learn more about the group's priorities, the partners leading this work, and the impact PLCC expects to achieve. Please contact ssomashe@umd.edu for more details.

RESULTS

One ●

PLCC's Small Business Action Team will hold itself accountable to the commitments in this plan and the results they are intended to achieve.

Two ●●

Initially, PLCC's Small Business Action Team aims to engage existing and new partners to advance this work. This means tracking participants advising this work and substantially advancing the identified actions.

Three ●●●

PLCC's Small Business Action Team aims to influence policy and legislation to create a supportive environment for this work. This means tracking outreach to legislators, mobilizations such as sign-on letters, and concrete policy wins achieved through this group's advocacy.

Four ●●●●

PLCC's Small Business Action Team will leverage and align resources to drive the goals of this plan. This set of activities will require tracking existing and new dollars supporting action plan activities and key in-kind support secured.

Five ●●●●●

PLCC will ultimately generate impact for small businesses and commercial districts in equity areas along the corridor. This means tracking the number of businesses partners reach through technical assistance, the capital secured and deployed, and how partners are coordinating with each other. It also means tracking the results of the place-based work. The Main Street model has proven effective for increasing small business revenues in commercial districts.

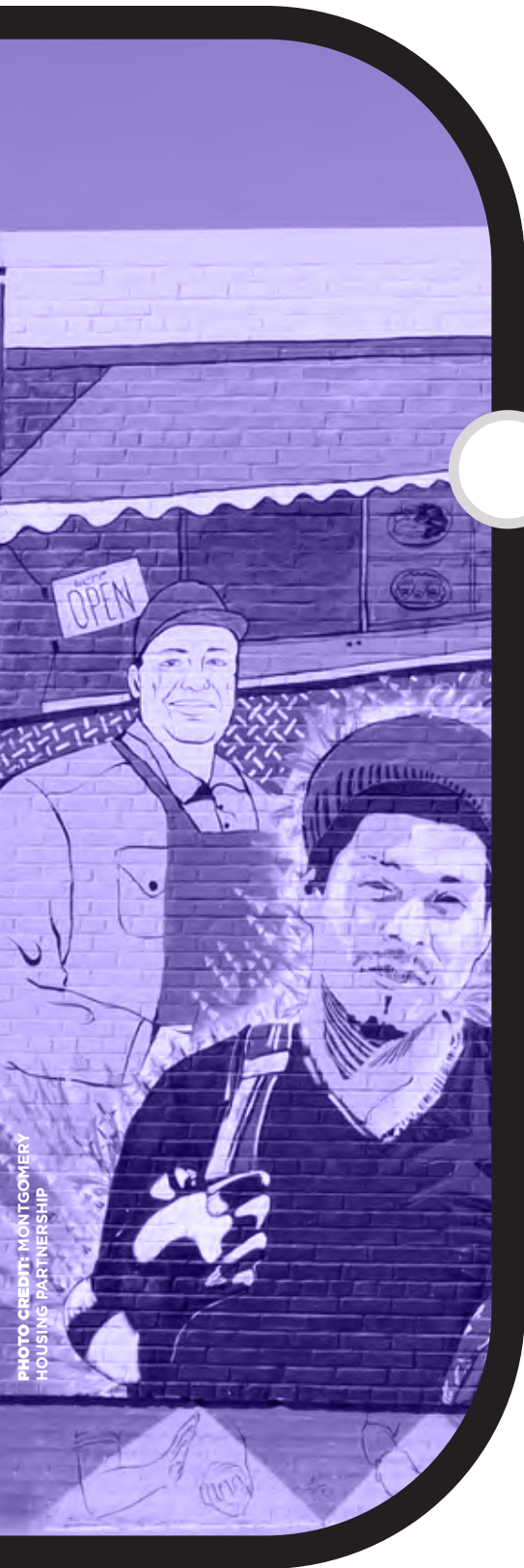


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CONCLUSION

Purple Line businesses are at a critical juncture. Small businesses are facing closure in the first months of 2021, just as they were in the second half of 2020. Although Purple Line construction has resumed, it is not yet at full tilt, and businesses will likely have to endure construction disruption for the next 2-4 years. The Greater Washington region is only at the beginning of a very uncertain economic recovery, locally, regionally, and nationally.

Small and micro-businesses pay county, state, and federal taxes, provide livelihoods to thousands of families throughout the region, and deliver essential services to residents and neighborhoods. For these businesses and the diverse communities that they represent to survive and thrive, this regional community must step up in new ways to support them.

PLCC's Small Business Support Action Plan presents a collective way forward to support small and micro-businesses along the Purple Line to survive, pivot, and transform to create a more robust Purple Line corridor that mirrors the cultural and economic diversity of the community.



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Support Action Plan
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