

## PLCC SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT ACTION PLAN

2021-2022

xecutive Summary

The Purple Line is a new, 21-station light rail line that will connect 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, which brings 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 and micro-businesses, primarily owned by immigrants and people of color, are those most affected by construction disruptions, increasing rents, and rising land costs. These businesses now also face exceptional hurdles in the wake of COVID-19.

No single entity has the skills and capacity to support the ecosystem of small and microbusinesses along the Purple Line to survive these intersecting challenges. Rather, it requires a coordinated approach.

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, 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. PLCC's Small Business Action Team, co-chaired by the Latino Economic Development Center and CASA, has convened partners across sectors since 2019 to support small businesses to survive construction disruptions and neighborhood gentrification. However, with the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the Team had to adapt quickly to the public health and economic threat from COVID-19 that extended well beyond what it could have imagined. This plan results from the group's renewed focus on small business survival in a dramatically changed landscape.

The PLCC Small Business Support Action Plan builds on a three-phase small business COVID recovery framework developed by Jill Schlesinger, a nationally-syndicated financial columnist. This includes immediate Triage, medium-term Transition, and long-term Transformation strategies that will create vibrant spaces for the existing community and attract new customers.

This plan prioritizes six 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.

## THIS PLAN FOCUSES ON ACTIONS THROUGH MID-2022 THAT INCLUDE:



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 focus on exploring the applicability of place-based management and the Main Street® model in 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.

## Policy, Advocacy, and Education

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.



The marketing in this plan primarily focuses 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 link directly 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 2 a businessto-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.

## Research and Relationship-Building for Transformation

The PLCC Small Business Action Team will also use this year to rebuild its vision for a thriving corridor post-pandemic and grow its momentum and capacity as a group, focusing on research and relationship building that sets the stage for long-term Transformation. 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 business property ownership; and commercial inclusionary zoning. Notable in the list of longer-term actions is a focus on entrepreneurship and informal businesses.

For more information about PLCC, please visit https://purplelinecorridor.org/. If you are interested in partnership, please contact ssomashe@umd.edu

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