



# WILDWOOD

## **Economic Development Committee July 19, 2023 Meeting Wildwood Business Forum Report**

### **Overview**

During the Economic Development Committee meeting in October, the Department proposed the installation of quarterly business forums. These forums were designed to help the City get direct input from the Wildwood business community. The Economic Development Committee approved the plan, and the City hosted its first business forum on January 12, 2023. During the Economic Development Committee meeting in February, the Committee approved the 2023 Business Forum schedule. Please see below for the 2023 Business Forum Schedule.

- Q1: Thursday, January 12, 2023
- Q2: Thursday, April 13, 2023
- Q3: Thursday, July 13, 2023
- Q4: Thursday, October 12, 2023 (*last forum of the year*)

At first, the Wildwood Business Forum was well received by the Wildwood business community. The City had over 35 businesses attend the first forum. Attendance was down for the second forum. Only 15 businesses attended the business forum on April 13, 2023. Attendance decreased further at the third forum with only 12 businesses in attendance.

During the forum, Chair Ottenberg and the Department gave a brief presentation covering temporary sign regulations, upcoming business events, and the City's efforts to increase business participation in the governing process. The Department has included the presentation in the agenda for your review. Hugh Share also gave a presentation covering the Biking and Walking Benefits Program. Lastly, staff from the City's Parks Department gave a brief presentation about Celebrate Wildwood and the sponsorship opportunities available for businesses.

### **Open Discussion**

During the open discussion portion of the business forum, business owners asked questions about permanent signage regulations in Wildwood. The Department noted that the Planning & Zoning Commission is only reviewing regulations regarding temporary signage at this time. The owner of Premier Martial Arts stated that the Celebrate Wildwood parade was a great opportunity to bring attention to businesses in Wildwood. Overall, business owners showed support for the proposed changes in the City's temporary sign regulations. The also showed support for the Biking and Walking Benefits Program. Lastly, business owners stated that Celebrate Wildwood provides a great opportunity for business owners to get involved in the community. The Department did note that questions were limited at the third business forum.

### **Follow-Up Email to Attendees**

After the business forum, the Department emailed follow-up information to all the attendees. The Department sent out the following items.

- Wildwood Business Forum Presentation
- 2023 Business Survey link
- Business Forum Summary
- Wildwood's 2023 City Calendar
- Information on the Biking and Walking Benefits Program
- Celebrate Wildwood Sponsorship Information
- The next Economic Development Committee meeting date, time, and Zoom link
- The next City Council meeting date, time, and Zoom link

### **Feedback on the Business Forum's Timing**

The Department did receive some feedback regarding the business forum's format. Attendees suggested that future forums take place at different times during the day. Some business owners were unable to attend the forum because they were dropping their kids off at school. Some business owners also suggested having the forum bi-annually instead of quarterly. The Department has taken these suggestions under advisement, and the Department believes that the forum could move to a bi-annual schedule.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the third business forum did see a decrease in attendance, but the Department received positive feedback from participating businesses. The Department would like to note that many business owners were on vacation on the day of the third forum. Business owners that couldn't attend the forum also told the Department that they appreciate the effort coming from the City.