

## Notes from Public Engagement Forum: Thursday, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

### Participants:

David Webber  
Nia Imani  
Bonnie Lee  
Connie Carpenter  
Nickie Davis  
Diane Suhler

### Responses to Question 1:

1. Nia: As a person who owned her own daycare, she reported significant losses during this time and having to ‘pivot’ to other models for her business.
2. Nickie: Her activities actually increased since the onset of Covid as she has to engage with businesses as they try to address the slowing economy. She has engaged a lot with counseling to help businesses understand the loan process provided by the CARES Act.
  - a) She indicated that she also has to deal with mental health issues that business owners are experiencing.
3. Bonnie: Several family members have tested positive; friends have lost businesses; her church’s food pantry has experienced huge demand and difficulty keeping up. She has been disappointed with the City’s response to Covid—especially the lockdowns that have resulted in difficulties for businesses.
4. Connie: She has not personally been impacted significantly, but the missions of her church (Wardrobe, Loaves & Fishes, RATI) have experienced difficulties.
5. David: Limited personal impact; mostly concerned for the lack of a plan to address the needs of the homeless community.

### Question 2: What are the housing and community development needs that have been amplified by COVID? What type of support is most critical?

1. Small business owners (and larger ones as well) have experienced significant difficulty. One of their struggles is to determine the best path going forward?
  - What is their next step?
  - How do they determine whether or not to try to stay in business? Need for financial analysis and planning advice.
  - Should businesses pivot to different activities?
  - How/when should small-business owners transition back into the job market? Career counseling services needed.
2. Many people need help with children—childcare, tutoring, internet connections—in order to be able to work and support their families.
  - Need to identify facilities for essential workers’ children, perhaps provided by employers.
  - Might enlist hospitals to help in some capacity.
3. Continued need for utility and rent assistance.

4. Need a coherent plan to address the needs of the homeless population, especially those needs of families and singles with children.
  - Expand the availability of ‘Blessing Boxes’
  - Address the needs of families living in cars
  - Provide facilities around the city—e.g., water fountains, benches/places to sit, public warming centers; these might be located using public garages or the Farmers’ Market area
  - Public hygiene facilities: erect a MKT-quality facility near the Armory
  - Perhaps provide hotel accommodations for families
5. Use creative solutions to simultaneously address the needs of certain populations and support the business community:
  - Purchase meals from area restaurants for the nightly Loaves and Fishes meal using CDBG funds
  - Hire other businesses for services—e.g., cleaning of facilities used for homeless;
6. Create work programs similar to those used in the Depression—CCC, WPA—where COVID funds are used to hire out-of-work persons to do jobs in the community.
7. Provide free/accessible mental health care; drug addiction counseling
8. Job transition programs; business financial counseling/advising by professionals