



Coastside Recovery Initiative Open House Event Proceedings

February 11, 2021
Zoom Meeting
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Background

This document summarizes program highlights and key themes from small group discussions during the Coastside Recovery Initiative's Open House Event. A total of 187 participants RSVP'd for the Open House and 161 attended, representing local business (restaurants, hotels, and farms), labor, nonprofits and philanthropy, news and media and the Coastside community at large. In addition, various elected officials attended including representatives from Assembly Member Kevin Mullin and Marc Berman's offices, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, District 3 office, the San Mateo County Harbor District and Mid-Coast Community Council. Finally, all councilmembers attended from the City of Half Moon Bay along with senior City staff.

Overview of the Open House Event

This event was open to the community and was intended to serve as the public launch of the Coastside Recovery Initiative. As such, the event had three primary objectives: (1) to build general awareness of and interest in the Coastside Recovery Initiative; (2) engage a cross-section of Coastside residents in aspirational conversations about how to create a more equitable, vibrant, and resilient Coastside economy; and (3) promote opportunities to provide additional input and/or be involved.

The event was designed to be consistent with one of the Coastside Recovery Initiative's most important guiding principles of inclusion. Victor Hernandez and Nicolas Laszkiewicz provided simultaneous Spanish-language interpretation throughout the program. Local artist Nancy Margulies provided graphic recording to summarize program content with descriptive visuals and text (please see Appendix I). And finally, all participants were encouraged to use the chat function in zoom for questions, which City Manager, Bob Nisbet and Deputy City Manager, Matthew Chidester responded to in real time.

Program Highlights

The City of Half Moon Bay's Mayor, Robert Brownstone, and San Mateo County District 3 Supervisor, Don Horsley, welcomed everyone to the event and spoke about hope for the Coastside's future and the opportunity provided through the Coastside Recovery Initiative to make plans for a better and stronger community and economy.



Event emcee and consultant with the City of Half Moon Bay, Erica Wood, provided an overview of the event program followed by a polling process that was led by Assistant Director for the County of San Mateo's Office of Sustainability, Danielle Lee. The intent of the polling process was to gather responses from participants on where they lived and the sector in which they worked. Unfortunately, due to technical issues, the polling results were not captured.

Featured speaker, Former Chief Economic and Business Advisor to Governor Gavin Newsome and local business owner, Lenny Mendonca, then spoke about why it was an ideal time to plan for recovery. He challenged participants to consider how the Coastside gets to the next economy and mentioned some of his previous work, Regions Rise Together, while serving in the Governor's office. Mr. Mendonca also described best practices for successful recovery and economic development efforts including active community engagement, strategies that are grounded in data, goals that are aspirational and consideration of the realities and characteristics unique to a particular region.

City of Half Moon Bay Senior Analyst and Program Manager for the Coastside Recovery Initiative, Karen Decker, then provided an overview of the Coastside Recovery Initiative. This included highlighting each of the Initiatives guiding principles, short- and long-term objectives as well as key project milestones and timing.

Small Group Discussion Overview

After these program highlights, participants were then invited to engage in small group discussions. President and CEO of the Half Moon Bay Coastside Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau, Krystlyn Giedt, introduced the small group process, noting the breadth of experience and backgrounds represented in the eleven small group facilitators (please see Appendix II for complete list). Krystlyn also provided a general email address recovery@hmbcity.com where participants could share their ideas if they were uncomfortable doing so in the small group.

Each small group followed a similar format and participants were asked to respond to the following two key questions:

1. When you think about jobs, workers, and the local economy, what concerns you the most?
2. What are the most important actions we can take to address the concerns you shared?

Participants were encouraged to share their ideas during the discussion and use the chat function in zoom. Facilitators were asked to take notes and record the small group discussions. Participants were assured that the recording would be used to help the Initiative team ensure all ideas were captured and would not be made public.



Small Group Discussion and Chat Themes

There were 11 small groups during the event with seven to nine participants in each group. Notes were collected from seven of the groups and audio recordings from two of the groups that were transcribed. Two of the small group facilitators did not provide notes or audio recordings from their discussions. Chat messages were also captured from participants during the event program as well as messages that were received at the recovery@hmbcity.com general email address after the event. All the notes collected from the small groups, chat messages and email messages were carefully reviewed using thematic analysis. A summary of the key themes is provided below.

Discussion Question One

When you think about jobs, workers, and the local economy, what concerns you the most?

Industry impacts and job displacement

The Coastside economy is defined by the tourism and hospitality industry, restaurants, and small businesses and these have been hardest hit by the pandemic. Industry impacts and associated job losses were a top concern and received the most comments from small group participants. Restaurants for example, have closed and re-opened several times throughout the pandemic, so they have lost staff. In addition, participants mentioned the loss of jobs in agriculture (Bay City Flowers was cited as a specific example) and in media, which were challenges prior to COVID-19.

Job quality – too many low-wage jobs

In addition to industry impacts and housing, job quality was another concern. Participants described the Coastside as a “bedroom community” where people live but then commute over the hill for jobs that provide higher wages, better benefits, and opportunities for advancement. Participants noted the challenge of an economy predominated by too many low-wage jobs and that people can get paid more for doing the same job over the hill than on the Coastside. This creates a lot of employee turnover and churn, which is difficult for employers. Participants also worried that the Coastside was not attractive to the next generation of the workforce because higher-paying job opportunities are lacking here.

Lack of affordable housing

The lack of affordable housing was also a top concern, including housing for specific population groups, such as seniors and for low-skilled, low-wage workers. Many of these workers must live somewhere else that is more affordable and are then unable to work full shifts because of commute times, traffic or due to appointments that are closer to their homes. Participants acknowledged that one of the reasons why housing prices are so high is because of limited supply and that very few affordable housing projects happen on the Coastside. Some property owners have tried to offer affordable rental housing but have later converted it to vacation rentals (Airbnb) with higher income potential to offset property taxes. While participants felt Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) were a promising start they had not seen any data on how many had been built.



Vulnerable populations and essential workers

Participants discussed the pandemic and the economic hardship it has created for families, especially women, noting that families must make difficult choices to have one higher-wage earner working over the hill and one lower-wage earner working here. Families with single wage earners cannot survive in the Bay Area. Essential workers were mentioned as a vulnerable population and small group participants shared concerns about their safety as well as a suggestion that they receive hazard pay, acknowledging this could put further strain on small businesses. Farmworkers were also mentioned as another vulnerable group and the challenges they face from lack of health care because of their undocumented status to not being paid at a local hemp farm as was reported in local news.

Jobs and skills mismatch

Participants discussed the jobs and skills mismatch on the Coastside and that it is difficult to find people for specific jobs because the talent pool is less diverse here than in other parts of the Bay Area. Finding qualified workers with basic skills was mentioned as a challenge and one participant shared her experience of job candidates who had just graduated from high school without an ability to do basic math. Participants were concerned about a lack of investment in our public schools and student preparation for technology sector jobs in Silicon Valley.

Other concerns

Other concerns shared by small group participants and through chat messages included the need to protect the Coastside's open spaces, businesses that leave the area after getting started here, commercial real estate vacancies, including in the Half Moon Bay downtown area and how to get vaccinated.

Discussion Question Two

What do you think are the most important actions we can take to address the concerns you shared?

Improve the digital infrastructure

Improving the Coastside's digital infrastructure was by far the most important action to address concerns related to jobs, workers, and the economy. It received the highest number of comments from small group participants who described the fragility of the internet on the Coastside and that there are no guarantees of service. Participants felt that fiber optic internet capacity was critical and necessary to support people working from home and new ways of doing business.

Create vibrant work and community spaces

The second most important action shared by small group participants and in chat messages was to create more vibrant commercial and community spaces. Comments included figuring out how to leverage the beautiful scenery on the Coastside to attract new businesses (e.g., research and technology firms) as well as how to make creative use of existing, vacant commercial space.



Additional comments included creating inviting community spaces (cafés, libraries, and street eateries) and co-working spaces that promote people coming together and collaborating with one another to spark ideas and generate opportunities. Small group participants noted that changing regulations to allow for street eateries and speeding up the adoption of practices like parklets are helpful and necessary.

Several small group participants mentioned the City of Half Moon Bay downtown area and that they look forward to revitalization efforts to make it a place that is more vibrant, pedestrian and bicycle friendly.

Diversify the economy

The Coastside economy is largely dominated by a tourist economy. Because of this small group participants felt that it was important to diversify the local economy by taking steps to attract new types of businesses (e.g., technology firms) and businesses that can offer higher-wage jobs. Ideas included offering incentives for businesses to come here and rebranding the Coastside as a place where businesses can grow and thrive.

Support schools and the next generation of the workforce

Education and preparing our young people for the jobs of tomorrow was mentioned as an important action by both small group participants and through chat messages. Comments included investing more in our public schools and in childcare and making the Coastside a more attractive place for families with children. Additional comments touched on the importance of getting children and youth back to school as well as engaging them as thought partners in the Coastside Recovery Initiative.

Spark business and job innovation

In addition to diversifying the economy, small group participants offered ideas for how to create new job opportunities including business cooperatives for the Latinx community to bring lower wage earners into higher paying jobs. Similarly, business incubators and support for startups were mentioned as ideas as well as support for cottage industries. Participants also suggested using retired members of the workforce to impart skills and knowledge to newer members of the workforce through mentorships or apprenticeships.

Increase affordable housing opportunities

Housing is seen as a major issue and increasing more affordable housing opportunities was considered one of the critical solutions necessary for creating a more equitable, vibrant, and resilient economy. Specific ideas included providing incentives to private landowners and developers to build affordable housing and converting unused hotel spaces into multi-family units.



Invest locally

Participants noted the City and County should identify funding opportunities and make sure that Coastside businesses and organizations are able to take advantage of those opportunities. The importance of investing locally was mentioned several times and that the large numbers of visitors to the Coastside need to be encouraged to patronize local businesses.

Protect the environment and open spaces

Concern for the environment was expressed through several chat messages during the program and idea of creating a center for environmental stewardship. Other participants noted the importance of our recreational spaces and that these could be better leveraged to strengthen our economy. Finally, one participant noted the importance of creating spaces where we could honor the ancestral lands of the Ohlone people.

Other actions

Other actions mentioned by participants to address concerns related to jobs, workers and the economy included improving public transit and reducing traffic, increasing access to affordable housing, revitalizing the agricultural industry and consideration of pausing the transient occupancy tax. Finally, participants noted the importance of solutions that address vulnerable residents and people left behind.

Small Group Report Outs

After the small group break out discussions, participants came back together as a large group for the final parts of the program. They included a report out from each of the groups for which the facilitators were asked to share one big idea or highlight from their discussion. Facilitators mentioned the importance of listening to each other, support for creating business cooperatives, improving the digital infrastructure, environmental and open space concerns, including youth voices and finding ways to encourage local high school graduates to return to live and work on the Coastside.

Closing Comments

Half Moon Bay City Manager, Bob Nisbet, provided closing comments and a summary of next steps which included sharing the recordings and a written summary of all the ideas from the Open House on the City's website. He invited participants and other community members to share ideas, ask questions, and provide feedback at recovery@hmbcity.com. Finally, participants were also encouraged to join the recovery task force.



Coastside Recovery Initiative Open House Event Proceedings – Appendix I

Graphic Recordings

Figure 1 – Opening speakers and overview of the Coastside Recovery Initiative



Figure 2 – Top concerns related to jobs, workers and the economy shared during small group discussions



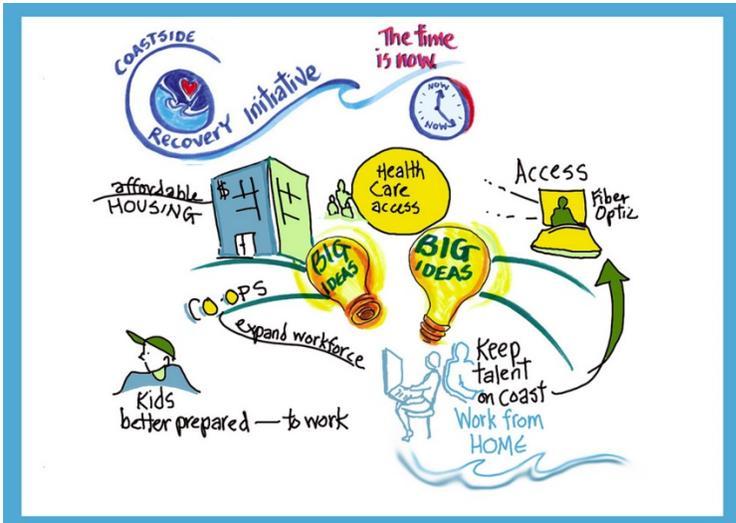


Graphic Recordings Continued

Figure 3 – Top actions to be taken to address concerns shared during small group discussions



Figure 4 – Big ideas shared by small group facilitators from small group discussions





Coastside Recovery Initiative Open House Event Proceedings – Appendix II

Small Group Facilitators

Danielle Lee, Assistant Director, Office of Sustainability, County of San Mateo

Diane Passen, Owner, Half Moon Bay Media

Emma Moctezuma, Case Manager, Ayudano Latinos a Soñar (ALAS)

Jennifer Chong, Public Works Program Manager, City of Half Moon Bay

Jill Ekas, Community Development Director, City of Half Moon Bay

Krystlyn Giedt, CEO of the Half Moon Bay Coastside Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau

Mary Oldham, Board Member, Mavericks Community Foundation

Matthew Chidester, Deputy City Manager, City of Half Moon Bay

Nate Serdy, Realtor, Compass Real Estate

Sandra Winter, Executive Director, Senior Coastsiders

Victor Gaitan, Management Analyst, City of Half Moon Bay