

TRENT HILLS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE STRATEGIC PLAN – 2023 - 2027

MISSION

To promote and support the economic growth and prosperity of our members and the community. We foster business excellence, enhance tourism vitality, champion diversity and inclusivity, and strengthen community connectivity in Trent Hills through collaboration.

VISION

To be the leading business organization, uniting our communities through collaboration. We aim to drive community engagement and economic development, becoming the go-to resource for businesses and a catalyst for prosperity by fostering strong partnerships and unity.

VALUE STATEMENT

We are committed to serving our members and the greater business community through the dedication and goal-oriented efforts of our volunteers and staff. We maintain a set of values to guide our actions, decisions, and interactions, ensuring that operations align with our core principles and serve the best interests of our members and the community.

1. **Collaboration:** We believe that working together is the key to success. We foster a collaborative environment where everyone's ideas are valued and respected.
2. **Integrity:** We adhere to the most stringent ethical principles and remain unwavering in our dedication to acting morally and responsibly.
3. **Commitment to Members:** Our dedication to delivering the best possible experience is centered around our members, who are at the core of everything we do.
4. **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** We celebrate diversity and believe that our differences make us stronger. We are dedicated to promoting equity, creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome, valued, and has equal opportunities to thrive.
5. **Innovative:** We believe that innovation is key to success. We are committed to staying ahead of the curve and finding new and creative ways to meet our members' needs.
6. **Accountability:** We make objective and responsible decisions displaying accountability to the membership while maintaining consistency of the Chamber brand.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Build the Chamber Brand

Objective: To promote the chamber's brand, value proposition and achievements through effective and innovative marketing and communication channels and platforms.

Responsibility: Executive Committee, Business Operations Plan and Staff

Support: Volunteers

1. **Strategic Branding:** Develop a clear and consistent brand identity, including a compelling logo, tagline, and visual style that represents the Chamber's mission and values.
2. **Engaging Website (Building the Brand):** Create a user-friendly and informative website that serves as a central hub for information about the Chamber's activities, events, resources, and membership benefits.
3. **Content Marketing (Building the Brand):** Publish valuable content on your website and social media platforms, such as articles, blog posts, videos, and infographics, that address relevant business topics and local news.
4. **Email Marketing (Building the Brand):** Build and maintain an email list to send regular newsletters, event invitations, and updates to your members and subscribers.
5. **Member Testimonials (Building the Brand):** Feature success stories and testimonials from satisfied Chamber members who have benefited from their membership, demonstrating real-world examples of the Chamber's value.

Improving brand awareness is crucial to attract new members, gain community support, and effectively advocate for local businesses. Remember to consistently monitor your brand's performance, gather feedback, and adjust strategies as needed to ensure that your brand is resonating with your target audience and effectively raising awareness about the Chamber's mission and benefits.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Economic Development

Promoting economic development is crucial for fostering growth and prosperity.

Responsibility: Membership Development, Government Relations Committee, Business Operations Plan

Support: Volunteers and Staff

1. **Business Incubation:** Establish a business incubation program to support startups and small businesses by providing resources, mentorship, and shared workspace.
2. **Skills Training and Workshops:** Organize workshops, training sessions, and seminars to enhance the skills and knowledge of the local workforce, making them more competitive in the job market.
3. **Marketing and Promotion (SEGMENTED BY MEMBER AND TOURISM):**

- **Chamber Member Marketing:** Promote local businesses and products through marketing campaigns, both online and
 - **Tourism Marketing:** Promote tourism initiatives and assets in the area to boost the local economy. Collaborate with local tourism organizations to market the region effectively.
4. **Tourism Development:** Promote tourism initiatives and attractions in the area to boost the local economy. Collaborate with local tourism boards to market the region effectively.
 5. **Business Attraction:** Develop strategies to attract new businesses to the area, taking advantage of available incentives and resources.
 6. **Entrepreneurial Support:** Provide resources and support specifically tailored to entrepreneurs, such as business plan assistance, financing options, and mentorship programs.

Advocate for Economic Development: Champion initiatives that promote local economic growth, such as business-friendly zoning, streamlined permitting processes, and infrastructure improvements.

Collaborate with local government, economic development agencies, and other stakeholders to ensure a coordinated effort in promoting economic development in the rural area. Moreover, staying engaged with the local community and regularly assessing the needs and priorities of businesses will help the Chamber adapt and evolve its strategies effectively.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Community Engagement

Objective: To build strong relationships and partnerships with various stakeholders, such as government, education, non-profit and media, to enhance the chamber's influence and impact as a champion for business and community development.

Responsibility: Executive Committee, Business Operations Plan

Support: Volunteers and Staff

1. **Community Events:** Support community events/activities that bring residents from different communities together, connecting and branding Trent Hills as one community.
2. **Networking Opportunities:** Host regular networking events for businesses and community members to meet, share ideas, and establish partnerships.
3. **Community Projects:** Support and engage in community projects, such as beautification efforts, infrastructure improvements, or environmental initiatives that benefit all communities.
4. **Cross-Promotion:** Encourage businesses in different communities to cross-promote each other's products and services, fostering a sense of unity and shared success.
5. **Joint Marketing Campaigns:** Collaborate with local businesses, tourism organizations, and municipality to launch marketing campaigns that promote the entire region as a destination for tourists and investors.

By actively facilitating connections and promoting collaboration among businesses, residents, and local organizations, the Trent Hills Chamber of Commerce can help create a stronger, more vibrant, and interconnected community in their region.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: MEMBERSHIP

To attract, retain and engage a diverse and representative membership base that builds a strong, collective voice for business.

Responsibility: Membership Development Committee, Business Operations Plan Support: Volunteers and Staff

Membership Recruitment Action Items - Draft

1. **Member Referral Program:** Encourage current members to refer potential new members. Offer incentives or discounts for successful referrals.
2. **Online Presence:** Ensure a strong online presence through a user-friendly website and active social media channels. Highlight the benefits of membership and provide easy sign-up options.
3. **Educational Workshops:** Host workshops or webinars on topics relevant to local businesses. These events can attract potential members seeking knowledge and resources.
4. **Membership Benefits:** Clearly communicate the benefits of Chamber membership, such as access to business resources, advocacy, marketing opportunities, and cost-saving programs.
5. **Community Engagement:** Get involved in local community events and initiatives. Show potential members that the Chamber plays an active role in improving the local business environment.
6. **Personal Outreach:** Assign Chamber staff and/or volunteers to personally reach out to prospective members. This can involve phone calls, personalized emails, or face-to-face meetings.
 - **Pilot a Chamber Ambassador Program for board members and non-board members** to encourage member involvement, recruit members
 - **Develop a plan for board members and staff for member drop-ins** to see how they are doing

Remember to track your recruitment efforts and adapt your strategies based on what works best for your Chamber and your target audience. Building a diverse and engaged membership base is a gradual process, so be patient and persistent in your efforts.

Membership Retention Action Items

Retaining members is essential for the sustainability and success of any Chamber of Commerce.

1. **Regular Communication:** Maintain consistent communication with members through newsletters, emails, and social media updates to keep them informed about Chamber activities, benefits, and upcoming events.
2. **Member Feedback:** Solicit feedback from members through surveys or feedback sessions to understand their needs and preferences. Act on their input to improve Chamber services.
3. **Value-Added Benefits:** Continuously evaluate and enhance the benefits of Chamber membership, such as exclusive discounts, networking opportunities, marketing and promotion opportunities, and business resources.
4. **Personalized Support:** Offer personalized support to members, especially new ones, by assigning a Chamber representative or mentor to help them navigate Chamber services and resources.
5. **Recognition and Awards:** Recognize and celebrate member achievements through awards or acknowledgment at Chamber events, fostering a sense of pride and loyalty.

Business Operations: The formal process of membership renewals is conducted through chamber staff activities, included in the Business Operations Plan.

Remember that member retention is an ongoing process, and it's crucial to adapt your strategies based on member feedback and changing needs. Building a strong sense of community and demonstrating the tangible benefits of Chamber membership can go a long way in retaining members in the Trent Hills Chamber of Commerce.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Advocacy

Advocating for members at all three levels of government is a critical role for a Chamber of Commerce.

Responsibility: Government Relations and Advocacy Committee, Policy Action Plan

Support: Volunteers and Staff

1. **Policy Analysis:** Continuously analyze municipal policies and regulations that affect local businesses. Identify areas where changes or improvements are needed.
2. **Engagement with Local Officials:** Establish strong relationships with municipal officials, including council members, mayors, and city managers. Regularly meet with them to discuss business concerns.

3. **Advocacy Committees:** Form advocacy committees within the Chamber to focus on specific issues, such as taxation, zoning, or economic development. These committees can research, strategize, and communicate concerns effectively.
4. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Create public awareness campaigns to inform the community about the importance of specific policies to local businesses. Use various media channels to reach a broad audience.
5. **Regular Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication with municipal decision-makers. Share updates, concerns, and progress with them regularly.
6. **Advocate for Economic Development:** Champion initiatives that promote local economic growth, such as business-friendly zoning, streamlined permitting processes, and infrastructure improvements.

Federal and Provincial Advocacy Action Items

1. **Policy Research and Development:** Conduct in-depth research on provincial and federal policies and regulations affecting local businesses. Develop policy recommendations based on this research.
2. **Regular Engagement:** Establish ongoing relationships with provincial and federal elected officials, including MPs and Senators, as well as relevant government departments and agencies.
3. **Advocacy Committees:** Create advocacy committees within the Chamber dedicated to specific issues, such as taxation, trade, or healthcare policy. These committees can research, strategize, and communicate concerns effectively.
4. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns to educate the public and policymakers about the impact of provincial and federal policies on local businesses. Use various media channels and public events to reach a broad audience.
5. **Advocate for Economic Development:** Advocate for policies that promote economic growth, such as infrastructure investments, workforce development, and tax incentives at both the provincial and federal levels.
6. **Grassroots Advocacy:** Mobilize your members and the broader community to engage in grassroots advocacy efforts, such as letter-writing campaigns or petitions, to influence provincial and federal decisions.

Maintain a non-partisan stance to ensure that advocacy efforts remain focused on the best interests of your members and the broader business community. Persistence and consistency in your advocacy efforts, as well as the ability to adapt to changing political landscapes, are key to achieving positive policy changes at government levels.