



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Business Friendly Initiatives Announced

Earlier today, City of Columbia officials announced new business friendly initiatives to streamline operations. The new initiatives will shorten waiting periods, provide more user-friendly processes and create a more business friendly environment for those conducting business with the City of Columbia.

Speakers at the press conference included:

- Mayor Daniel J. Rickenmann
- District III Councilman and Economic and Community Development Committee Member, Will Brennan
- District I Councilwoman and Economic and Community Development Committee Member, Tina Herbert
- Former Secretary of Commerce, City Councilman and Committee Chairman, Joe E. Taylor
- City Manager Teresa Wilson

Additional speakers included, Jean Cecil Frick, chairperson for the board of directors of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce. Sabrina Odom, executive director of North Columbia Business Association (NCBA) welcomed guests to the North Columbia business district.

The business friendly initiatives announced include:

1. ELIMINATE WATER AND SEWER CHANGE OF USE FEE

Owners will no longer be charged a capacity fee when a commercial property is redeveloped for a change in use. For example, if building changes from retail to restaurant use and the meter size is under 4", no capacity fee will be charged. On changes of use that result in needing a meter larger than 4", credits will now be made for existing service.

2. APPLYING FOR NEW BUSINESS LICENSES AND RENEWALS IS BEING SIMPLIFIED

Neither personal or company income tax returns will need to be shown in order to apply or renew your business license. It is estimated that the full process will be online by the fourth quarter of 2022.

3. ADDITIONAL FLEXIBILITY AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR GREASE CAPTURE COSTS

a. City staff will work with a project's engineer, architect or plumber to approve the best option for the project's needs for grease capture including grease traps, grease interceptors or other options as they become available.

b. A reimbursable loan program is available that can offset 50% of your grease capture costs, up to \$10,000. We are also evaluating the potential for a rebate program for these improvements.

4. ELIMINATION OF ON-SITE PARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR BUILDINGS 7500 SQ FT OR LESS

The city will no longer require on-site parking or require a business to rent off-site parking in order to receive an occupancy permit for commercial and retail buildings 7500 sq ft or less. Parking for residential buildings will be required.

5. MAKING IT EASIER FOR BUSINESSES TO GROW

Businesses will no longer be required to remove existing parking spaces in order to meet landscape requirements for redevelopment.

6. AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM THAT FOCUSES ON RECRUITING NEW INVESTMENTS, NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND THAT SUPPORTS GROWING OUR SMALL BUSINESSES INTO BIGGER BUSINESSES

a. Hiring full-time business recruiter(s) who will specialize in recruiting urban economic development through hotels, restaurants, retail, entertainment venues and corporate partners.

b. Establishing project manager(s) to assist local businesses with expansion, help new businesses open and to guide and assist new investments through the permitting process.

****Please see attached flyer and photos from today's press conference**

Captions:

DSC_0022: City Councilman and Committee Chairman, Joe E. Taylor giving brief details in regards to each initiative.

DSC_0093: Columbia Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, Carl Blackstone, Columbia Chamber of Commerce Chairwoman Jean Cecil Frick, Mayor Daniel J. Rickenmann and City Councilman and Committee Chairman, Joe E. Taylor.

The Business Friendly Initiatives Press Conference livestream can be watched on the City's YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/aJ7Moe3o4dQ>

Quotes:

"This is just the beginning and we want to encourage the economic growth and we want more people in the city center," said Mayor Daniel J. Rickenmann. "We can't talk about attainable housing, affordable housing, workforce housing, job initiatives and investment growth if we are not tackling the issues that have been holding us back. This is step one and we are only going to be able to do this together."

"Now that these deal killing costs have been addressed, we only need to speed up the permitting process and fix our non-competitive commercial property rate to put Columbia in a position to be the next great southern success story," said City Councilman Joe E. Taylor.

"We've got so much talent in our grade schools, tech schools and our higher education institutions and we need to continue to grow those foundations to keep that talent here to start a small business. Innovate with us, here at the City of Columbia," said District III Councilman Will Brennan.

"Startup costs for small minority and women-owned businesses can be a complete barrier sometimes or delayer project. By implementing the things we are doing today, I am hoping that will allow more small minority and women-owned businesses to open and more particularly along the North Main corridor," said District I Councilwoman Tina Herbert.

"I am encouraged by City Council's focus on the implementation of initiatives that advance a positive growth environment for all business owners across our city. The work with staff has been productive to identify and establish the conditions necessary for our business community to thrive. We look forward to the continued collaboration," said City Manager Teresa Wilson.

"The measures being announced today further enhance the integrity of doing business here. We want all businesses to know, not only are they valued, but they are being

heard," said Columbia Chamber of Commerce Chairwoman Jean Cecil Frick. "These initiatives are another reminder that the City of Columbia is open for business."

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