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Business owners concerned about crime, homelessness; optimistic about future

OAKLAND BUSINESSES SPEAK UP IN CHAMBER CITYWIDE BUSINESS CENSUS

Oakland CA – (July 22, 2017) – The Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce recently undertook a citywide business census, asking questions about general business conditions and emerging trends in the city of Oakland. “The census found businesses are somewhat bullish on future growth, but continue to struggle with some of Oakland’s most entrenched challenges including public safety, cost of living and doing business, and availability of commercial space,” said Barbara Leslie, President and CEO, Oakland Chamber of Commerce.

“We asked about the biggest obstacles for business expansion in Oakland,” said Ms. Leslie, “with respondents noting crime as the number one reason for reluctance to expand their businesses, followed by the city’s growing homeless population and illegal dumping.” Protests and graffiti came in third on respondents’ list of obstacles to business growth.

“Most businesses reported feeling positive about their future, as well as the future of Oakland,” continued Ms. Leslie. “48 percent of respondents believe the economy will improve slightly to significantly over the next year, while 35 percent believe the economy will weaken either slightly or significantly.

“We also found respondents have a greater sense of optimism regarding their own businesses, with 73 percent indicating their businesses are doing the same or better than a year ago,” Ms. Leslie said. “Importantly, when asked about employment plans going forward, most respondents indicated they plan on maintaining or growing their workforce, with only 5 percent considering layoffs over the next year.” The results were generally consistent across business size and industry type.

As found in previous Chamber studies, there is clear agreement among respondents that they chose Oakland for its location and quality of life, followed closely by its transportation infrastructure and diversity.

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When asked about their business's interaction with the City of Oakland, responses were mixed; with 36 percent of those polled saying they found the city helpful, and approximately 27 percent saying their experience was less than adequate. "We asked what city government could do to support local businesses, and open-ended responses were varied and passionate," said Ms. Leslie. "Business, and particularly our small business community, responded with a desire for streamlined planning and building services for businesses; addressing issues of homeless encampments and trash; focusing efforts locally and resisting the temptation to take positions on state and federal issues not relevant to local needs; and ensuring availability of housing and commercial space to allow businesses to stay and grow locally," Ms. Leslie concluded.

The survey was conducted over a period of 10 days, and achieved a statistically relevant 95 percent confidence level, and a 4.1 percent margin of error.

About the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

In addition to its traditional role of business and public policy development and advocacy, the Chamber in recent years has emerged as a regional research and data leader on a host of issues pertinent to government operations, business and industry sector analysis, and workforce trends, in addition to tracking the pulse and priorities of local voters. The Chamber engages in several research and polling projects annually, providing data to its membership and elected officials to inform policy and business decisions in support of both city and regional economic and workforce development efforts.

For additional information, please visit oaklandchamber.com.

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