



City of Palo Alto

COLLEAGUES MEMO

DATE: February 24, 2014

TO: City Council Members

SUBJECT: COLLEAGUES MEMO FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS BERMAN, BURT, HOLMAN, AND KLEIN REGARDING CREATION OF A PALO ALTO BUSINESS REGISTRY

Goal:

Palo Alto needs a Business Registry as soon as possible to answer such basic questions as how many people work in Palo Alto and for what types of businesses. We should implement a Registry in 2014.

Background and Discussion:

Impacts of commercial development and activity, such as traffic and parking impacts, are at the forefront of community concerns. The City Council made addressing these issues a council priority in 2013 and again in 2014. However, the City lacks adequate, reliable, and updated data to analyze the issues, structure best policies or programs and to measure their effects.

Palo Alto is one of the few cities in the region without a business registry or a business license. Most cities rely on these tools for obtaining and analyzing critical information about the characteristics of businesses in their communities for purposes such as informing zoning decisions and public safety planning and service response.

In addition, the Council has committed to developing a strong Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program in 2014 to reduce the traffic and parking impacts in our community. Good data is essential to design a sound program, establish baselines and monitor progress.

Recommendation:

We recommend that Council direct Staff to return to Council not later than the end of March with a proposal for a business registry which would include:

- An online registry to reduce costs, accelerate implementation and provide for efficient data analysis.
- Fees limited to cost recovery.

- A simplified, low cost questionnaire for very small businesses and exemption from registration for home based businesses.
- Questions designed to obtain information on the number of employees, types of businesses and other information that would be valuable for effective planning purposes.

Staff Impact:

The City Manager and the City Attorney have reviewed this Memorandum and have the following comments:

Effective implementation and enforcement methods for collecting and updating data will be important. Staff will evaluate using existing software programs first as means to keep implementation costs down.