



News Release

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City of Temecula's Office of Economic Development Selected to Receive Community Excellence Award

City helps local businesses survive and recover from COVID-19

SANTA ANA, Calif. – The U.S. Small Business Administration, Orange County / Inland Empire District Office has selected the City of Temecula's Office of Economic Development to be honored with a 2020 Community Excellence Award. This award recognizes the creation of an environment conducive to business growth, business retention, and significant support for economic development and job growth. The city's economic development team was nominated by Paul Nolta, Interim Director of the Inland Empire Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

The City of Temecula's Economic Development Team, led by Economic Development Manager Christine Damko, is tasked with spurring economic growth and development within the city. Temecula has over 111,000 residents and over 6,500 businesses. Damko's five-member team uses a variety of strategies and programs to accomplish their mission, but COVID-19 has brought unprecedented challenges this year.

In response to COVID-19, Damko and her team developed a robust crisis communication plan to maintain frequent communication with residents, businesses, community partners, and visitors. With the need to provide timely and relevant information regarding federal, state, and county COVID-19 orders and guidance, the team's plan included:

- Branding, with two new brands created. One brand is dedicated to COVID-19 updates and the other, Temecula Revive, is dedicated to the city's economic recovery.
- Press releases and e-blasts to inform the local business community about the status of city facilities, virtual services, and guidance and resources provided by the state, county, and city.
- Dedicated web pages, including two new pages on the city's website specifically relating to COVID-19 and the city's economic recovery.
- Creating weekly informational videos to provide updates from the city manager and other city departments.
- Creating community campaigns, including a new community-driven social media campaign that focusses on the business community. The #ShopYourBlock campaign created by Damko and her team promoted shopping locally during the COVID-19 crisis. The team collaborated with Jimmy Fu, a local photographer, who visited and photographed over 125 small businesses around the city. Fu's images were featured

during the fourteen-week campaign, along with images of the local business owners, their products, employees, and food.

Damko also worked closely with Nolta and the Inland Empire SBDC to develop and promote various small business workshops and training sessions, all at no cost to the business owners, to further assist during COVID-19. The City of Temecula encompasses Southern California Wine Country, and the area's wineries and breweries were hit especially hard by California's public health orders. The Inland Empire SBDC created training specifically for these sectors to address how businesses could re-tool their business strategies to cope with COVID-19. Damko's team used the city's social media channels, e-blasts, and a local cable TV channel to spread the word about these resources.

The SBA Orange County / Inland Empire District is honored to recognize the City of Temecula's Office of Economic Development as a 2020 Community Excellence Award winner.

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About the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) was created in 1953 and is a Cabinet-level agency of the federal government to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of our nation. The SBA helps Americans start, build and grow businesses, and recover from disasters. Through an extensive network of field offices and partnerships with public and private organizations, the SBA delivers its services to people throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. To learn more about SBA, visit www.sba.gov.

About the Orange County / Inland Empire District Office

The Orange County / Inland Empire District Office, under the leadership and vision of J. Adalberto Quijada, District Director, is responsible for the delivery of SBA programs and services in the Southern California counties of Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino. Located in Santa Ana near John Wayne Airport, the office and its staff facilitate understanding and access to SBA loan programs; coordinate and conduct hundreds of training sessions and special events annually such as matchmaking forums and loan workshops; and manage a portfolio of nearly 100 businesses enrolled in the agency's 8(a) business development program.