



Why is the Local Business Conference important?

Local businesses play a crucial role in our economy, our community and our culture. Collectively they are Austin's largest employer and responsible for 85% of the job growth. Collectively they pay the most sales tax. Collectively they drive the local economy. But local business brings something else that isn't as easily measured: They reflect and define our culture. This is something no recruited business can contribute. While we measure our economic success in metrics that include tax base, employed and unemployed and other economic growth indicators, we must also take into account the cultural impact.

Local businesses are an essential part of our community. From the Imagine Austin plan through last November's City Council elections, Austinites have voiced loud and clear that our local businesses are a part of our community value system. Every City Council member campaigned on a local business platform and every council person signed the Local Business Pledge. Through countless community workshops and surveys, our community reported again and again that a thriving local business community is vitally important.

The Local Business Conference is crucial to moving forward in supporting our local business community.

1. The Local Business Conference is the only place where we gather as a community to set goals and priorities to make the environment for local business better. There is no other forum for this.

3. Nowhere else do we gather the wisdom of local business owners to prioritize the most important issues. Through open discussion and collaboration, we come together as a community and reach consensus on the goals to be worked on and achieved in the coming year.

4. The Local Business Conference is the only business collective that both highlights problems and brings solutions to the table.

6. After each conference we form a Leadership Circle of 15-20 local business owners to guide the process of creating policy and programs to achieve the goals. There is no other process in existence that invites business owners to play a crucial role in creating policy for themselves and their peers. This year-long involvement educates, illuminates and engages local business owners in the growth of our city like no other activity or program.

7. So many public participation projects end up gathering dust on a shelf. Follow through and accountability are crucial. Through the Leadership Circle, public progress reports and a final report card at year end, our achievements and attainment of the goals ensures the work done at the conference will not fade into obscurity. One year later, we have a unique opportunity to celebrate our achievements and shine a spotlight on the city we so dearly love.