

# BUSINESS WALK

## POST-EVALUATION SUMMARY

El Dorado Hills — April 1, 2009



Conducted by:



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### Background

The El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with the El Dorado County, Office of Economic Development, launched their second annual Business Walk on April 1, 2009. The purpose of the Business Walk Series is to find out what is going on in the community and learn firsthand how the El Dorado Hills business and civic leaders can promote business and improve the local economy. The Business Walk promotes sales and job growth by helping to identify the concerns and barriers local businesses are facing. The Business Walk is designed to bring public and private sector leaders into direct contact with on-the-ground business owners and managers, learning first-hand what it takes in today's economy to run a business, identify what the county can do to help businesses survive and thrive, all the while letting the community know El Dorado County is working for them. During the second annual Business Walk, nearly 40 business and civic leaders, governmental managers and elected officials visited 137 businesses.

Their conversations focused on three basic questions:

- How is business?
- What do you like about doing business in the area?
- What needs to be done to make business even better?

### Summary Results

The El Dorado Hills economic climate as a whole is positive, as reported by the majority of business respondents. Overall a large number of companies reported doing well and very few who reported that their business was doing poorly. In general, most El Dorado Hills businesses visited hold a positive view of the local business climate. When asked how business is, over three-fourths provided a positive response—36 percent said business is either steady or fair while 50 percent said that business is either good or great.

The El Dorado Hills business community made it clear that they value the community, its growth and prosperity. When asked what they like most about doing business in the area, three things rose to the top for the vast majority of those interviewed: 1) location, 2) clientele/demographics and 3) proximity. When asked what needed to be done to improve business in the community, the things most frequently mentioned were 1) bureaucracy, 2) traffic issues and 3) signage. Of the rest, most cited challenges associated with the current economic climate, a need for more foot traffic, health care coverage, financing and more positive media coverage. Despite the adversity they are facing, very few said they had a negative view in regards to El Dorado Hills as a whole.

### Common Issues/Themes Identified

- Location: 81% (rated highest among what respondents "liked")
- Bureaucracy: 16% (rated highest among what respondents felt needed to be "improved")
- Proximity: 67% (rated third highest among what respondents felt needed to be "improved" )
- Clientele/Demographics: 68% (rated second highest among what respondents "liked")
- Traffic Issues: 12% (rated second highest among what respondents felt needed to be "improved")

The rest of this report provides additional detail on the responses to each of the interview questions, as well as steps being taken to improve the local business climate.

## 2009 INSIGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS

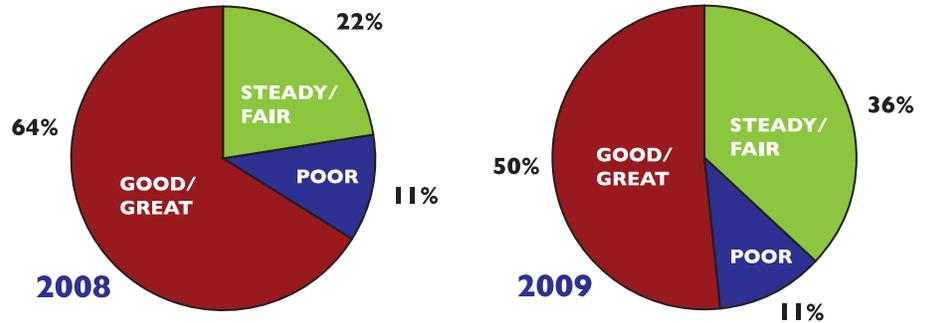
- Out of 137 business interviews, 86 percent are holding strong
- Many were looking for ways to get involved in the community and promote their business
- Sales/marketing support, community events, eateries, vacant store fronts, financing, workforce/schools and health insurance are some of the “other” things that need to be addressed
- Respondents are interested in hearing what El Dorado County can offer them

### How is business?

The businesses visited on the walk stated that their business community is very strong. Over three-fourths (86 percent) indicated that business is at least steady or fair. Half (50 percent) said business was either good or great (Figure 1); with many of the respondents saying business is picking up from the past couple of years. This trend was especially true for non-retail establishments whose core commercial activity was geared towards business-to-business sales rather than business-to-customer sales. With such a positive response, the El Dorado Hills business community is looking forward to more success and job growth in the future. As the country faces economic challenges, the businesses in El Dorado Hills are in good condition and are working hard to stay successful.

The businesses that have declined, represented by the response category of “poor” (11 percent), were most indicative of a shifting customer base/change in buying habits and employee cuts. That being said, most of the companies interviewed said business is good/great and they plan to keep it that way.

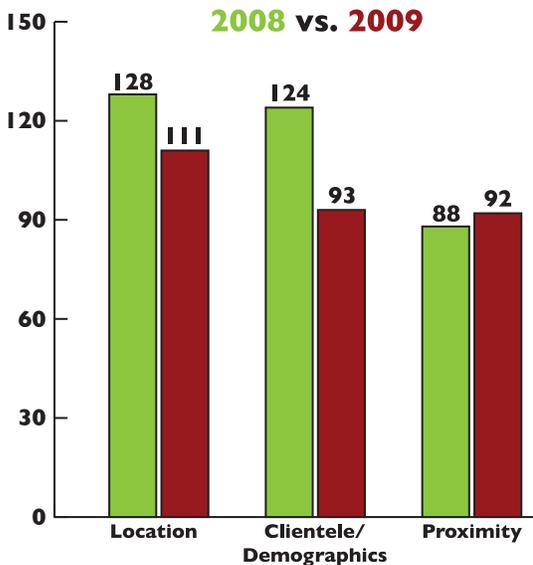
FIGURE 1: HOW IS BUSINESS?



### What do you like about doing business in the area?

“Location” was cited most frequently (81 percent) in regards to what respondents like about doing business in El Dorado Hills. (Figure 2). While El Dorado Hills is close to Highway 50 and other arterial routes, it also benefits from a desirable location in the Sierra Nevada foothills. Various respondents like that it is in more of a rural area but they are able to drive to Sacramento for more of a city feel; living in the foothills is a gateway to rural living/lifestyle.

FIGURE 2: WHAT DO YOU LIKE?



“Clientele/ Demographics” was the second most mentioned response. Sixty eight percent of the businesses interviewed cited that they enjoy doing business because of the clientele that comes in every day. El Dorado Hills has a very strong sense of community. Respondents felt that the local clientele are very loyal and have been for many years. Respondents also noted that many businesses have been working in the area for years and want to see it grow. Several people recognized the demographics as being a “family community.” The small town atmosphere promotes a sense of security and comfort in the community.

“Proximity” was the third most frequent response (67 percent). Respondents like the local neighborhoods and proximity that El Dorado Hills offers them to the many local businesses and restaurants. They stated that El Dorado Hills provides them with excellent accessibility to local schools, shopping centers and business parks. Respondents enjoy the town center and being able to work in the city they live in; because the town is centrally located it provides value to those coming from work in the Business Park or up from Sacramento. The proximity allows for a strong word-of-mouth network; many customers know of other businesses and provide referrals. The El Dorado Hills community is committed to business growth and success.

## What improvements are needed in the area?

Overall, respondents feel that El Dorado Hills is an attractive and desirable place to do business, yet there is always opportunity to enhance the community and build a better business environment. The graph below (Figure 3) shows a comparison of business responses between the 2008 and 2009 business walks. A little less than one-fifth (16 percent) felt that improvements in the area of bureaucracy were necessary. Some focused on exorbitant rents while other comments stated that jurisdictional fees were too high or space was not available. Several businesses commented that they knew of some companies having left the area to expand elsewhere because fees were too high. A general belt-tightening attitude was evident in the responses with a feeling that by lowering fees on small business, it would provide some breathing room and help others to prepare for the economic recovery.

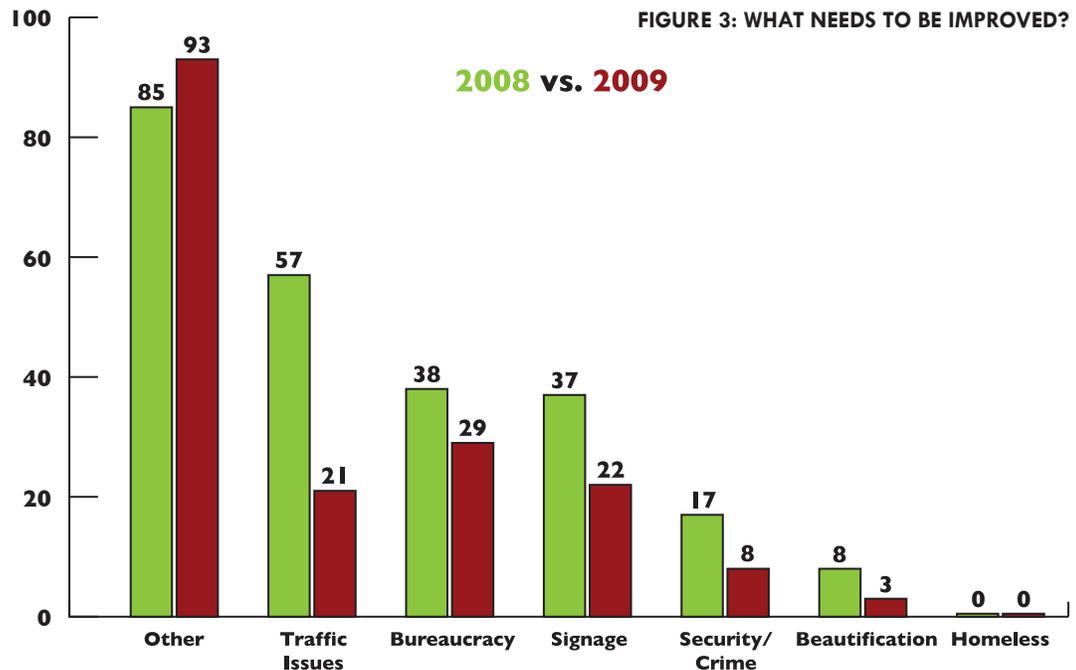
Twelve percent of people stated “traffic issues” as a significant concern. When events are held, parking becomes an issue. Respondents recommended shuttle busses. There is also a problem with kids playing in the parking lots, which is dangerous because peak traffic congestion has increased over the past couple of years. Respondents believe that the bad traffic may be due to lack of transportation construction, matching growth.

“Signage” came in third (11 percent) with respondents stating a need for better signage opportunities. Some specifically stated more signage on Latrobe Road and for the traffic on Green Valley Road. A few cited the need to advertise with sandwich

boards, while others are keen to further develop the El Dorado Hills “buy local” or “support local business” brand campaign promoting awareness of keeping money in the community. The complexity of the sign permit process and what many felt was unnecessary “red tape” were expressed as frustrating to many business respondents. Permits continue to be viewed as too expensive and many want more flexibility and visibility options.

Several “other” responses were also provided by 61 percent of respondents. Some of the general comments made included:

- Many businesses expressed interest in collaborative marketing opportunities. Besides more street-front signage and flexibility within the county sign ordinance, several business owners wanted a distinct “El Dorado Hills” brand and marketing campaign that would dovetail the chamber’s “Buy Local” campaign.
- Many business owners applauded the current number of local events, yet felt that an annual series of events would keep shoppers local while drawing in regional shoppers.
- Attracting a further diverse array of local eateries was next highest in the other category. While many business respondents replied that they liked the current mix, additional complimentary restaurants would add further variety and enhance the feel and quality of life of the community. The overwhelming response was not to cannibalize the customer base yet compliment and draw in new customers from around the area.
- Access to affordable capital is an emerging comment with small business owners. The possibility of establishing a local revolving loan fund or a one-stop referral service for businesses was expressed.
- Respondents also mentioned that when stores close down, they affect other stores. By filling the vacant stores, more business will come to the area.



### OTHER AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Cityhood
- Community/Events
- Eateries/Shopping
- Financing
- Health Insurance
- Parking
- Parks/Golf Courses
- Sales/Marcom/Press
- Telcom/Broadband
- Vacant Store Fronts
- Workforce/Schools

## Participating Businesses

The El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce, El Dorado County Office of Economic Development and the Sacramento Metro Chamber would like to thank the following businesses for providing feedback during the El Dorado Hills Business Walk:

- 3 BEEKMAN PLACE
- 4 MD URGENT CARE/MD STAT
- A MAAD TEA PARTY
- ACTION HOME NURSING SERVICES
- ADAMS CIGARS
- AEROMETALS
- AFFORDABLE LIFE INSURANCE
- AFLAC
- ALADINO FINANCIAL SERVICES INC.
- ALEPH
- ALOHA FAMILY DENTAL
- ALSTATE-SUSAN HORN-DEUBEL
- ANEW SKIN DERMATOLOGY
- ANSYS
- ARCHER BUILDING COMPANY INC.
- AZTECA AMERICA
- BARK AVE
- BELLA BRU CAFE AND CATERING
- BERETTA PHYSICAL THERAPY
- BISTRO 33
- BLUE RIBBON PERSONNEL SERVICES
- BOWEN HEALING SYSTEM
- BROCKWAY HAIR DESIGN
- CALEDONIA SALON
- CAPITAL VALLEY REALTY GROUP, INC.
- CAROL CARTER INTERIOR DESIGN
- CARPE DIEM COFFEE
- CENTERSTAGE DANCE ACADEMY
- CHIROPRACTIC ORTHOPEDIC GROUP
- CLARITY AVL
- COLD STONE CREAMERY
- COLDWELL BANKER
- CRA INTERNATIONAL
- CURVES
- DARRYL K. JOHNSON, DDS, MS - ORTHODONTICS
- DAVID R. DATWYLER, DDS
- DAVIS & AMARAL
- DIGITAL DOC LLC
- DIGITAL DOG AUTO RECOVERY
- DREAMBUILDERS KITCHEN & BATH
- DUSTY CREEK LUMBER CO., INC.
- EDWARD JONES
- EDWARD JONES
- EJ MASONRY
- EL DORADO ENDODONTICS
- EL DORADO HILLS 76
- EL DORADO HILLS DENTAL
- EL DORADO HILLS OPTOMETRIC CENTER
- EL DORADO HILLS PET CLINIC
- EL DORADO HILLS TRAVEL
- EL DORADO HOME THEATER
- EL DORADO PHYSICAL THERAPY & ASSOCIATES
- EL DORADO SAVINGS BANK
- EMEDICAL DEVICES (EMED CORP)
- ENGS MOTOR TRUCK CO.
- FEDEX OFFICE
- THE FINE ART OF DENTISTRY
- FIX SIGNS INC.
- FOLSOM LAKE REALTY
- GBH PARTNERS ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS
- GNC
- GOLDEN HILLS FAMILY DENTAL
- GOLDEN HILLS PSYCHIATRY
- GREAT CLIPS
- GREENROCK HOLDINGS, LLC
- HANG IT UP GALLERY
- HORIZON ENVIRONMENTAL INC.
- HOT CUTS
- IAFCI
- ILLUMINARE
- INSIGHT REAL ESTATE
- IR ADMINISTRATION
- ISU
- J HANSEN DDS
- JACK IN THE BOX
- JARED W. RUMINSON, DDS
- JENNINGS & JULIAN CONSTRUCTION
- JUICE IT UP
- JULIE L. LEAVERTON, DDS
- KINDERCARE
- LAW OFFICES OF DAVID M. TRAPANI
- LESLIE'S SWIMMING POOL SUPPLIES
- LIVE OAK CENTER FOR PHY. & ED.
- LONGS (CVS)
- LOWREY CHIROPRACTIC
- LPL FINANCIAL
- LUXURY HOME MAGAZINE
- LUXURY NAILS
- MAMA ANN'S
- MARBLE VALLEY SCHOOL
- MARKETPLACE VETERINARY HOSPITAL
- MARSHALL FAMILY MEDICINE
- MASON WEST INC.
- MASSAGE ENVY
- MAUI TACOS
- MECHANICS BANK
- MORGAN TAYLOR SALON
- MY EXECUTIVE OFFICES & FIND JOHN DOES
- NORCAL DIRECT MARKETING
- NORTHERN CA CHIROPRACTICE
- NUGGET MARKET
- OLD REPUBLIC TITLE COMPANY
- ONE STOP CLEANERS
- ONE2ONE DENTAL
- OUR HOUSE
- PACIFIC WEST HEALTHCARE PHARMACY
- PAKMAIL
- PARAGON
- PEETS COFFEE & TEA
- PELIKS & PELIKS DDS
- PERFORMANCE HEATING & AIR
- PETE'S RESTAURANT AND BREWERY
- PLACER TITLE COMPANY
- POSTNET
- PUEBLO CHICO CANTINA
- RALEYS
- RODNEY J. BUGHAO, DDS
- DR. RON SIMMS, D.C.
- ROMO & ASSOCIATES
- ROUND TABLE
- RUNWAY BOUTIQUE
- SHELLIE EDWARDS, DDS
- SHELL STATION
- THE SPA AT LA BORGATA
- STRATEGY FIRST
- SUBWAY
- SUBWAY
- SUITE AMERICA
- SUPERCUTS
- SWANSONS
- VANELIS' COFFEE
- THE VILLAGE DENTIST
- VILLAGE NAILS
- WELLS FARGO BANK
- WE OLIVE
- WINDPLAY DELI
- WINE KONNECTION

## RECENT ACTIVITIES

The El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce, the El Dorado Hills Community Foundation, in cooperation with the El Dorado County Office of Economic Development and other stakeholders have been instrumental in building local coalitions in support of the following business improvements initiatives:

- Awarding of the California Welcome Center in El Dorado Hills in fall 2009. Sixteen California Welcome Centers (CWCs) serve to promote their immediate regions as well as the entire State of California. All CWCs provide a concierge service for travelers while in California by providing destination, attraction, performing arts and accommodations brochures from throughout the state. CWCs also provide reservation services, Internet access, regional and California merchandise, attraction ticket sales and plasma screen advertising. For further details, go online to [visitcwc.com](http://visitcwc.com) and click through to news articles.
- Launch of an economic base analysis of the El Dorado Hills business community conducted by the Center for Strategic Economic Research. Designed to identify core business clusters and connect them with the necessary tools, resources and business climate to grow in El Dorado Hills. For more information, visit [strategiceconomicresearch.org](http://strategiceconomicresearch.org).
- Development of a retail and health care business retention and attraction customer analytics tool supplied by BUXTON. This cutting-edge demographics tool will assist local retailers in identifying and matching consumer behaviors, realigning their businesses' offerings, while identifying new and emerging trends in the local and regional marketplace. For more information, see [buxtonco.com](http://buxtonco.com).
- Review and development of regulatory and other public policy solutions affecting business activity county-wide by members of the Economic Development Advisory Committee – Regulatory Reform subcommittee.
- Review and recommendation of the following business development incentives for El Dorado Hills Business Park – Enterprise Zone, Recycling Market Development Zone and a hotel/motel sales tax rebate program.

The Sacramento Metro Chamber is the largest and oldest voice of business in the greater Sacramento area. Representing nearly 2,200 member businesses and business organizations in the six-county Sacramento region, the Metro Chamber serves as the region's leading proponent of regional cooperation and primary advocate on issues affecting business, strengthening the regional economy and quality of life. As a founding member of Partnership for Prosperity<sup>1</sup>, and in its role as managing partner of Metro Pulse<sup>2</sup>, the Metro Chamber executes the Business Walk Series in cooperation with its local chamber and public sector partners. The Metro Chamber and El Dorado County have partnered with 14 other regional jurisdictions and economic development organizations to provide one-on-one support for county businesses and throughout the Sacramento metropolitan region. These organizations, through Metro Pulse, are meeting one-on-one with businesses throughout the six-county Sacramento region to identify and address individual business needs and ensure continued growth and economic prosperity. For additional information concerning Metro Pulse, visit [metropulse.org](http://metropulse.org).

<sup>1</sup> Partnership for Prosperity is the Sacramento region's economic development strategy, which focuses on developing people, place and business.

<sup>2</sup> Metro Pulse is a coalition of 16 public and private sector partners focused on ensuring that the Sacramento metropolitan region is the best place to do business in California.