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Storefront assistance grants in action

/ April 19, 2019 by Elisabeth Handler

Guest blogpost by **Adrianna Oliver, OED Business Development Intern**

Silicon Valley is more than big business. According to EDD payroll data, over 80 percent of San Jose businesses are small businesses, which have fewer than 35 employees. San Jose is made up of thousands of small businesses that are run by local entrepreneurs and occupy the street level of our office and apartment buildings, giving our neighborhoods an urban feel.

Throughout the past few months as an intern at the San Jose Office of Economic Development (OED) I have seen the immense amount of outreach that every OED team member does to connect with small businesses and help solve their problems. OED business development officers are not only knowledgeable about City policies, but also take the time to get to business owners and learn about the issues they face or their plans for their businesses.



BellaJames Boutique in Willow Glen, before renovations



BellaJames, with the interior redesign complete

The more we learn about our local community, the better we can serve it. One of our main support services for small businesses is our Storefront Assistance Grant program. This program is open to local businesses

looking to reduce permit costs and make exterior space improvements to their storefront. We have two types of grants available, the Vacant Storefront Grant (up to \$15,000) and the Existing Storefront Grant (up to \$10,000).

Over the past few years, OED has helped more than 50 local restaurants, bars, retailers, and exercise facilities by offering these grants. The grants have not only alleviated the costs of expensive permitting, but allowed business owners to make their vision a reality and improve the experience of pedestrians. These grants have helped businesses create outdoor patios, add attractive signage to aid with marketing and branding, make beautiful indoor renovations, and more. The grants

are available to business owners leasing a vacant ground floor space or occupying an existing ground floor space, and who are looking to enhance their storefronts. For more information and to apply, please contact **Sal Alvarez**. (salvador.alvarez@sanjoseca.gov)

Adrianna Oliver is majoring in Finance with minors in Retail Studies and Spanish at Santa Clara University.

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