

Business Connection



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Pleasanton Chamber Celebrates 75 Years of Supporting the Community

It all started back in 1907 when a small group of Pleasanton's influential citizens met at City Hall for the purpose of organizing a civic body that would do work to further the progress of Pleasanton and to communicate with the citizens and businesses of Pleasanton an ambition to enhance and grow the town.

This was the genesis of the Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce as it is today. The formal incorporation was completed on September 30, 1946, and the reason for celebrating the chamber's 75th anniversary in 2021. "This gives us the opportunity to thank and remember our past leaders that were instrumental in guiding the chamber to continued success," said Steve Van Dorn, President/CEO of the Pleasanton Chamber. "After all, the chamber would not be where it is today without the support of our members and our awesome community," he said.

"Great communities have great chambers," said Dave Kilby, President and CEO of Western Association of Chamber Executives (W.A.C.E.) and executive vice president of corporate affairs at the California Chamber. "I think a case could definitely be made that Pleasanton is what it is today – a great community – because of the work of the chamber for the past 75 years."

About the Chamber

The Pleasanton Chamber is a non-profit voluntary organization currently made up of roughly 700 members ranging from small mom-and-pop type businesses to major corporations located in the Tri-Valley. Each member organization pays annual dues based on the type of business and the number of employees.

The chamber takes great pride in helping Pleasanton remain among the very best cities in the country in which to live, work and raise a family while providing support, services, and value for its member organizations. Programs such as Leadership Pleasanton and committees within the chamber including Economic Development, the Ambassadors, and the Pleasanton Young Professionals all involve working together for the betterment of the Pleasanton community. As it states in Pleasanton 2025: A Community Vision, "Our strong local economy and extraordinary quality of life happen by design, not by accident."

History of Growth

Frank Capilla, 1984 chamber board chair, recalled a significant time where "the chamber was flat broke, no money." Over lunch at LaRoche's restaurant in 1979, Wells Fargo agreed to loan \$7,000 to the chamber, thanks to the efforts



of Larry Lindsey and Jim Barri.

"I think the best thing we did was hire Debra Strong to be the full-time manager," said Joyce Shapiro, 1979 chamber board chair, referencing upgrading the Chamber office staff. Prior to this time, Chan Anderson was the lone manager of the Chamber as a part-time employee.

In the meantime, Hacienda Business Park came to town and the chamber really started gaining momentum. "Joe Callahan said if you're going to do business at Hacienda, we want you to belong to the chamber. We just really started to take off," said Capilla.

Marty Inderbitzen, 1983 cham-

ber board chair, expressed a similar sentiment. "I remember the 1980's as the decade that the Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce really came into its own. In those years, we set a goal for membership development and grew the chamber to 1,000 members. This was a remarkable achievement made possible by the approval and development of Hacienda Business Park and the Stoneridge Mall," said Inderbitzen.

"No matter what the circumstance, when there is something that needs to be addressed, the community comes together and sees that it happens," said James Paxson, 2015 chamber board chair and current general manager of Hacienda. "So often, the convening force or common thread to that collective response has been the Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce through their active civic engagement and care for those things that make Pleasanton, Pleasanton," he continued.

Supporting the Pleasanton Community

Leadership Pleasanton, created by the chamber in partnership with the City of Pleasanton in 1989, is a program to develop community leaders. Comprised of individuals from all sectors of the community,

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75 Years

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the participants meet monthly nine times for day-long sessions on topics of history, government, education, recreation, business, public safety, health and infrastructure.

In 1997, the chamber formed its Community Foundation to generate funding otherwise unavailable for programs benefiting the chamber, its members and the community. The Foundation's mission is to support and advance small business development, business technology development, service projects and educational programs of the Pleasanton community.

"The thing that has been most impactful to my chamber experience was the courage that it took to form a PAC so that business had a more formal seat in community discussions," said John Sensiba, 2007 chamber board chair, on the 2004 formation of the Business And Community Political Action Committee, BACPAC. "It really allowed business to put their money where their mouth was. It was never intended to dominate the discussion, just to include the voice of business and I think it has done that well. Taxes on business help maintain our quality of life in Pleasanton and I think the chamber does a great job of advocating for a business-friendly environment."

The chamber, through its

Community Vision Program launched in 2008, has been a catalyst for identifying and advocating fulfillment of community-developed objectives for a better Pleasanton in areas of housing, education, public safety, parks, recreation, infrastructure, health, and the local economy.

In 2013, the chamber launched the Pleasanton Young Professionals, the premier networking group for emerging and established young professionals age 21-40.

"The chamber provides many with the opportunity to lead from the front, to actively serve our community and to leave Pleasanton a little bit better than when we found it," said Laura Brooks, 2009 chamber board chair. "While the chamber is an amazing business organization, it is also a community organization filled with people who are passionate about our city and our residents."

As the chamber looks back on its rich history over the last 75 years, the business climate is a key driver of the community's success. "Of all the Chamber's most memorable accomplishments, most significant to me these many years is its enduring success with people," said Scott Raty, who served as the chamber's CEO for a total of 16 years. "Pleasanton is blessed with a richly diverse business community that contributes enormously to the economic success and quality of life we enjoy."