



A Community First Economic Opportunity Plan for District 8 and Orange County

Supporting Small Businesses Without Displacing Residents

For too long, economic growth in Orange County has been measured by how many luxury developments we approve, how many corporations we attract, or how much outside money enters our region. But the people I speak with across District 8 from Meadow Woods to Hunters Creek, from Southchase to Wyndham Lakes, from Moss Park to Lake Nona continue asking the same question. Who is this growth actually helping?

“The issue is not whether Orange County grows. The issue is whether growth finally starts working for the people already living here.”

Because while our region continues growing rapidly, many small business owners and working families feel like they are fighting simply to stay afloat. Commercial rent continues rising. Insurance costs continue increasing. Traffic continues worsening. Startup costs remain difficult for everyday residents to overcome. Meanwhile, many local entrepreneurs especially Hispanic, Black, Afrolatino, Caribbean, immigrant, and other POC and BIPOC business owners still feel locked out of opportunities that should already exist within their own communities.

I believe economic growth should begin at the neighborhood level. Not from political slogans. Not from temporary campaign promises. And certainly not from policies that prioritize corporations over the residents who already call District 8 home. I want District 8 to become a model for responsible, community focused economic development that protects current residents while creating real opportunities for local businesses to succeed.

The Current Reality Facing District 8

Orange County continues experiencing major economic expansion, especially around Medical City and Lake Nona. Yet many residents still feel disconnected from the benefits of that growth. A family owned restaurant in Meadow Woods cannot compete with a national chain that can absorb rising lease prices without concern. A first generation entrepreneur in Southchase may possess the skills, vision, and determination to open a business but still lack access to affordable startup capital. A Black owned landscaping company in Wyndham Lakes may continue struggling with permitting delays, rising insurance costs, and inconsistent county support despite serving the community for years.

At the same time, longtime residents increasingly feel like their communities are being

transformed around them instead of with them. Neighborhoods that helped build the cultural identity of District 8 now fear becoming economically displaced by unchecked growth and outside investment pressure. That is why I believe District 8 needs a fundamentally different approach to economic development. One that prioritizes local ownership, affordability, neighborhood stability, transparency, and long term economic inclusion.

Building an Economy That Prioritizes Residents

I want to establish what I call Local First Business Corridors throughout communities such as Meadow Woods, Southchase, Hunters Creek, Moss Park, Sawgrass, Wyndham Lakes, and parts of Lake Nona. These corridors would prioritize small businesses, local entrepreneurs, minority owned businesses, family owned storefronts, and longtime community based businesses that continue reinvesting directly into District 8.

Instead of rewarding only corporations with the largest financial resources, my vision focuses on empowering businesses that already have roots inside our neighborhoods. This means reducing bureaucratic delays, streamlining permitting processes, improving bilingual business assistance, supporting storefront improvements, and making county resources more accessible for local entrepreneurs.

The goal is simple. Make it easier to open and sustain a local business than it is to abandon one.

I also believe one of the greatest threats facing small businesses is the continued rise of commercial rent instability. When rent increases become excessive, local businesses disappear, chain stores replace neighborhood culture, and communities begin losing their identity. I do not believe the solution is punishing property owners. I believe the

solution is creating incentives that encourage stability.

Under my proposal, Orange County would create voluntary partnership incentives for landlords and commercial property owners who maintain affordable commercial spaces, prioritize local tenants, and reduce speculative vacancy practices. In return, participating properties could receive infrastructure prioritization, beautification support, permit acceleration, and public recognition opportunities. Growth should strengthen communities instead of erasing them.

I also want District 8 to become one of the most community focused entrepreneur ecosystems in Central Florida. Not centered around luxury office towers. Centered around neighborhoods, schools, churches, libraries, and workforce centers. These entrepreneur hubs would provide free startup classes, bilingual mentorship, financial literacy education, AI and digital marketing training, legal assistance partnerships, youth entrepreneurship programs, coworking opportunities, and small business networking support.

The strongest economies are not built only by attracting outside corporations. They are built when residents themselves become owners. A local entrepreneur hires local workers, spends money locally, reinvests locally, and creates long term community wealth. That is how we build sustainable economic growth without displacement.

Final Vision

I do not want District 8 to become another example of growth that pushes out the very people who helped build these communities. I want us to become an example of what responsible growth actually looks like.

A future where small businesses can survive. A future where local residents can afford to remain in the communities they love. A future where entrepreneurs can access opportunity and where economic development serves people before profit.

Because success should not only be measured by how many luxury buildings we construct. It should be measured by whether working families, Hispanic families, Black families, Caribbean families, Afrolatino families, immigrants, and longtime residents can still build a future here too.

That is the kind of economy I want to fight for throughout District 8 and across Orange County. One built on opportunity, accountability, transparency, and a commitment to protecting the people who made these communities what they are today.

THIS IS OUR PATH FORWARD.