



VIENNA HOME BASED BUSINESSES

TBLC Discussion 11.13.25

WHY SUPPORT VIENNA HOME-BASED BUSINESSES?

THROUGH THIS INITIATIVE, THE TOWN COULD BOOST ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY TIES, AND CONTRIBUTE TO CONTINUED TOWN PROSPERITY

For the Town

1. Diversifies the local economy.
2. Builds a more resilient business community.
3. Enhances community satisfaction and engagement.

For Home-Based Businesses

1. Increases visibility and revenue.
2. Provides access to resources and training.
3. Builds stronger networks and opportunities for collaboration.

This program positions Vienna as a pioneer in supporting home-based entrepreneurs, creating a win-win scenario for the town and its residents.

Primary Goals

1. **Economic Development:** Increase the revenue and growth potential of home-based businesses.
2. **Business creation and sustainability constraints:** Address zoning, licensing, and regulatory challenges unique to home-based entrepreneurs.
3. **Visibility and Engagement:** Promote home-based businesses to the broader community.
4. **Resource Allocation:** Provide tailored tools, resources, and programs to support their success.

Key Objectives

1. Identify the industries represented by home-based businesses.
2. Develop targeted policies and services for these industries.
3. Promote collaboration between home-based entrepreneurs and other sectors.
4. Enhance accessibility to town services, training, and funding.

POSSIBLE PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

PHASE 1: RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Action Items:

1. Establish a **Home-Based Business Subcommittee** including representatives from the home based business community, local officials, and economic development experts. Bring in other expertise from Fairfax County, Chamber of Commerce/VBA, and new business incubation resources.
2. Conduct a **comprehensive census** of Vienna's home-based businesses to gather data on:
 - Business types, industries, and revenue sizes.
 - Challenges faced by home-based entrepreneurs.
 - Satisfaction with current town services.
3. Benchmark successful programs in nearby and other innovative towns such as Boulder, CO, and Portland, OR.

New Idea: Use geospatial mapping to visualize the distribution of home-based businesses and identify clusters for networking opportunities.

PHASE 2: OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Targeted Survey Campaign

Design a detailed survey to collect data on:

1. Business models, industries, and growth aspirations.
2. Challenges in business establishment, zoning, licensing, and customer acquisition and other impediments to viability and sustainability. Identify make or break issues facing our Vienna home based business community.
3. Needs for resources such as training, grants, or networking. Engage with businesses that support or could support home based businesses – Fed Ex, UPS, Staples/Office Depot, Best Buy ... to see how they could support this program thru special offers, discounts etc.
4. Preferences for town support programs (e.g., shared workspaces, childcare grants).

Execution:

- Distribute through digital channels, direct mail, and in-person outreach.
- Use community platforms like Nextdoor, local Facebook groups, and the town's website to promote participation.
- Offer incentives such as a free business listing in a new **Home-Based Business Directory**.

PHASE 3: TAILORED SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- **Home-Based Business Directory (High Priority)**
- **Zoning and Licensing Simplification**
- **Mentorship and Peer Networking**
- **Childcare Support Program**
- **Shared Resources and Facilities**
- **Pop-Up Markets and Expos**
- **Digital Marketing Toolkit**
- **Targeted Grants and Microloans**
- **Home-Based Business Recognition/Awards Program**
- **Home Business Liaison**

PHASE 4: AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Strategies for Promoting Home-Based Businesses

1. Buy Local Campaigns

- Create a “**Support Your Neighbor Entrepreneurs**” campaign promoting home-based businesses.
- Use social media, newsletters, and local events to spread awareness.

2. Home-Based Business Spotlights

- Feature a business weekly in town communications, social media, and local media outlets.

3. Collaborative Marketing

- Develop a co-branded advertising campaign allowing home-based businesses to share costs while reaching wider audiences.

4. Community Engagement Initiatives

- Organize “**Meet the Entrepreneurs**” events where residents can learn about home-based businesses.
- Distribute a printed version of the business directory to all Vienna households.

PHASE 5: FEEDBACK, EVALUATION, AND SCALING

- 1. Conduct a **post-program survey** to evaluate satisfaction, participation rates, and impact on business growth.
- 2. Publish a report summarizing the program's success and lessons learned.
- 3. Identify opportunities to scale successful initiatives into long-term policies.

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS FROM OTHER TOWNS

- 1. **Boulder, CO:**
 - Provides flexible zoning ordinances for home-based businesses.
 - Offers low-interest loans for scaling operations.
- 2. **Portland, OR:**
 - Created a mentorship program pairing experienced entrepreneurs with home-based business owners.
 - Hosts annual home-based business expos attracting significant foot traffic.
- 3. **Berkeley, CA:**
 - Offers free online business courses tailored to home-based entrepreneurs.
- 4. **Somerville, MA:**
 - Pop-up shops and neighborhood marketplaces feature home-based businesses.
- 5. **Eugene, OR:**
 - Developed a “Home Business Toolkit” to simplify zoning and licensing processes.

APPENDIX

PRACTICAL, PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS (BASED ON NEARBY BEST PRACTICES)

1. **Build a “Home Businesses” page + searchable directory and a “Town-Certified” badge** (copy Arlington/Leesburg/Rockville approach). Low cost; one staff or intern to maintain.
2. **Partner with a nearby SBDC / SCORE for a quarterly bootcamp & monthly office hours** (copy Loudoun/Alexandria). Free content and volunteers; staff only coordinates scheduling.
3. **Publish a one-page home-occupation rules/FAQ** modeled on Fairfax/Falls Church/Rockville to reduce permitting calls. Post as downloadable PDF and distribute in permit emails.
4. **Launch a modest monthly pop-up / small makers market pilot (10–20 vendors)** using municipal parks or library spaces (copy Alexandria/Leesburg events). Promote with social spotlights.
5. **Recruit volunteer advisors from within your affluent resident base** (retired executives, real estate, legal, finance) to run mentorship “office hours” (copy Arlington/Falls Church mentorship models).
6. **Pilot a small photography day and group packaging/co-op purchase** (bundle cost across 10–15 businesses) — low staff coordination, high marketing ROI (seen in Montgomery/Arlington programs).

REGIONAL AREA JURISDICTIONS ACTIVITIES

NORTHERN VIRGINIA

1) Arlington County (BizLaunch / Arlington Economic Development)

What they do: one-on-one counseling, workshops/webinars, bilingual business support, startup guidance, marketing & permitting help; active small-business outreach and event support.

Why it's useful: turnkey counseling model you can copy (volunteer counselors + county staff).

2) Fairfax County

What they do: clear online guidance for home-based businesses (zoning rules and one-page guidance), county business resources & small business research pages, connections to SBDC and local business clinics. Fairfax's zoning pages provide explicit home-based business permitting instructions and fees.

Why it's useful: excellent example of simple, centralized rules + signposting to SBDC/technical assistance.

3) City of Alexandria / Alexandria Economic Development Partnership (AEDP)

What they do: free counseling and one-on-one help, incubator-style programming and strong "makers / holiday market" event promotion (Made in ALX); regular startup guidance pages and small business helpdesk.

Why it's useful: strong model for pairing marketing/events (holiday makers markets) with counseling services.

REGIONAL AREA JURISDICTIONS ACTIVITIES

NORTHERN VIRGINIA

4) Loudoun County / Launch Loudoun (Mason Enterprise Center partnership)

What they do: Launch Loudoun/Small Biz Development Center (SBDC) partnerships, no-cost advising, start-your-business workshops, resource library and cohort programs; county event calendars with recurring maker/farmer market support.

Why it's useful: county ↔ SBDC partnership is a low-cost way to provide counseling & workshops to many home businesses.

5) Falls Church

What they do: clear Home Occupation rules (minor vs major home occupation) with plain-English FAQs and a business resource page that connects entrepreneurs to county/state technical assistance and local networking.

Why it's useful: very clear home-occupation rule sets reduce friction and inquiries.

6) Leesburg (Town of Leesburg)

What they do: "Locally Leesburg" business directory and video showcase series; active "locally" branding and digital directory to promote local small businesses and makers.

Why it's useful: town-branded directory + video series is a replicable, low-cost visibility program.

7) Prince William County

What they do: Small business resource pages, entrepreneur/startup guides, permitting/zoning checklists for home-based operators, and project management help for small business growth projects.

Why it's useful: templates and project-management help are useful for home businesses scaling into physical operations or events.

MARYLAND SUBURBS (DC METRO)

- **8) Montgomery County, MD**

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- What they do: County Business Center — centralized online hub of step-by-step guides, funding & incentive pages (including home-based business exemptions), a network of county-funded support organizations, and curated links to SBDC & county programs.

- Why it's useful: excellent model for a single-page hub that consolidates permits, exemptions, workshops, and partner links.

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- **9) Rockville (City)**

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- What they do: published “Citizen’s Guide to Home-Based Businesses” (straightforward brochure), and a Small Business Impact Fund to offer targeted financial assistance for qualifying businesses.

- Why it's useful: combines simple guidance materials with a small grants/impact fund model — both replicable at small scale.

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- **10) Prince George’s County (PG County)**

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- What they do: Business Development Section and permitting navigation for home-based operations; economic development corporation services and small-business technical assistance (PGCEDC / SCORE cooperation).

- Why it's useful: shows an approach where permitting, inspections, and business development coordinate to help home operators become “legitimate” quickly

MARYLAND SUBURBS (DC METRO)

- **11) Anne Arundel County / Annapolis area**

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- What they do: County economic development & small business resource centers, small business resource/assistance programs, and workforce/economic development partnerships (AA EDC). They maintain startup guidance and low-interest loan info.
- Why it's useful: county EDO + EDC partnership model is a way to offer advisory + small funding programs via nonprofit partners.

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- **12) Gaithersburg (City)**

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- What they do: city economic development office that runs business assistance programs, marketing support, and event facilitation for local artisans and small businesses.
- Why it's useful: city-level promotion + event facilitation is a low-cost program to increase sales and visibility.

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- **13) Bethesda / Greater Bethesda (Montgomery County collaboration & Bethesda Urban Partnership)**

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- What they do: strong merchant association (Bethesda Urban Partnership) plus Montgomery County business portals and grant/incentive links. They provide a small business portal, promotional partnerships, and local merchant programs.
- Why it's useful: merchant partnerships and co-op marketing in higher-income suburbs produce outsized ROI with small budget.

ROSS-CUTTING THEMES & CLEAR, LOW-COST ACTIONS

From the examples above, these practices recur and are low-cost / staff-light to implement :

1. **Centralized online hub / directory + town “certified” badge** (Arlington, Leesburg, Montgomery, Rockville). — quick wins; build once, low maintenance.
2. **Partner with SBDC / SCORE / county EDO for workshops & one-to-one counseling** (Loudoun, Arlington, Montgomery, Alexandria). — free expert capacity.
3. **Plain-English home-occupation guidance & one-page zoning FAQs** (Fairfax, Falls Church, Rockville). — reduces staff calls and compliance issues.
4. **Seasonal markets / “Made in...” events + rotating pop-ups** (Alexandria, Leesburg, Loudoun) — proven to boost sales and local awareness.
5. **Small local grant / impact fund or subsidy program** (Rockville, county microgrant programs in MD) — helps businesses buy equipment/marketing.
6. **Clear permitting navigation + single point of contact** (Prince George’s Business Development Section, Prince William County) — reduces friction for first-time registrants.

TOP 10 (HIGH-IMPACT, LOW-TO-MEDIUM COST, STAFF-FEASIBLE)

1. Townwide Online Directory + Digital Map of Home Businesses

A polished, mobile-friendly site where residents can browse/search local businesses by category.

Partner with a local high school/college web class or volunteer developer.

Cost: Low | Difficulty: Easy | Impact: High (immediately increases visibility).

2. “Certified Local” / Town Seal Program

Simple application; businesses that meet basic compliance get a badge (digital + sticker) for marketing.

Creates trust among affluent customers and makes home businesses feel official.

Cost: Low | Difficulty: Easy | Impact: High (prestige and credibility).

3. Monthly Pop-Up Market Series (rotating venues)

Rotate among parks, schools, libraries, and town centers.

Residents with high disposable income will buy local if products are accessible.

Cost: Low–Medium (permits, minimal event support) | Difficulty: Moderate | Impact: High.

4. Mentorship & Professional Advisory Network

Recruit retired executives, consultants, and professionals who already live in your town (many will volunteer).

Offer free “office hours” once a month.

Cost: Low | Difficulty: Moderate (coordination) | Impact: Very High (knowledge-rich community).

TOP 10 (HIGH-IMPACT, LOW-TO-MEDIUM COST, STAFF-FEASIBLE)

5. Business Skills Bootcamp (E-commerce, Branding, Marketing)

Partner with local colleges, SCORE, or SBA offices for workshops.

Focus on online sales since many are in crafts/e-commerce/consulting.

Cost: Low | Difficulty: Easy | Impact: High.

6. Social Media Campaign — “Meet Our Home Entrepreneurs”

Weekly spotlight on the town’s official social pages/newsletter featuring a business.

Increases visibility, builds pride, encourages neighbors to buy local.

Cost: Low | Difficulty: Easy | Impact: High.

7. Annual “Homegrown Business Fair & Awards”

Showcase vendors, networking, and award categories (Best Startup, Most Creative, etc.).

Drives recognition and town pride.

Cost: Low–Medium | Difficulty: Moderate | Impact: Medium–High.

8. Simplified One-Page Guidance Sheet (“How to Run a Home Business Here”)

Clarifies zoning, signage, parking, and licensing in plain English.

Cuts down on confusion and builds trust.

Cost: Low | Difficulty: Easy | Impact: Medium–High.

TOP 10 (HIGH-IMPACT, LOW-TO-MEDIUM COST, STAFF-FEASIBLE)

9. Local Procurement Policy

Encourage schools, libraries, and town departments to source services and gifts locally (consulting, catering, design).

Cost: Low | Difficulty: Moderate | Impact: Medium–High.

10. Volunteer “Small Biz Navigator” Program

Train a few volunteers (or interns) to help businesses with setup tasks: websites, QuickBooks, marketing.

Cost: Low | Difficulty: Moderate | Impact: Medium–High.

NAICS CATEGORIES

Administrative Management and General Management C	Convention and Trade Show Organizers	Investment Advice	Other Clothing Stores	Plumbing, Heating, and Air-Conditioning Contractor
Advertising Agencies	Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Office	Janitorial Services	Other Computer Related Services	Professional and Management Development Training
All Other Business Support Services	Cosmetics, Beauty Supplies, and Perfume Stores	Jewelry Stores	Other Cut and Sew Apparel Manufacturing	Religious Organizations
All Other Consumer Goods Rental	Curtain and Linen Mills	Knit Fabric Mills	Other Direct Selling Establishments	Residential Property Managers
All Other General Merchandise Stores	Custom Architectural Woodwork and Millwork Manufac	Landscape Architectural Services	Other Grantmaking and Giving Services	Residential Remodelers
All Other Health and Personal Care Stores	Custom Computer Programming Services	Landscaping Services	Other Grocery and Related Products Merchant Wholes	Retail Bakeries
All Other Home Furnishings Stores	Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services	Lessors of Nonresidential Buildings (except Miniwa	Other Management Consulting Services	Sales Financing
All Other Miscellaneous Ambulatory Health Care Ser	Educational Support Services	Marketing Consulting Services	Other Management Consulting Services	Savings Institutions
All Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers (except To	Electronic Shopping	Masonry Contractors	Other Media Networks and Content Providers	Sewing, Needlework, and Piece Goods Stores
All Other Miscellaneous Wood Product Manufacturing	Electronics Stores	Miscellaneous Financial Investment Activities	Other Performing Arts Companies	Siding Contractors
All Other Personal Services	Engineering Services	Miscellaneous Intermediation	Other Personal and Household Goods Repair and Main	Sign Manufacturing
All Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical	Environmental Consulting Services	Motion Picture and Video Production	Other Personal Care Services	Small Arms, Ordnance, and Ordnance Accessories Man
All Other Specialty Trade Contractors	Exam Preparation and Tutoring	Musical Groups and Artists	Other Pressed and Blown Glass and Glassware Manufa	Snack and Nonalcoholic Beverage Bars
All Other Specialty Trade Contractors	Fine Arts Schools	New Housing For-Sale Builders	Other Professional Equipment and Supplies Merchant	Soap and Other Detergent Manufacturing
All Other Support Services	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers	New Multifamily Housing Construction (except For-S	Other Scientific and Technical Consulting Services	Software Publishers
All Other Telecommunications	Florists	New Single-Family Housing Construction (except For	Other Services to Buildings and Dwellings	Sporting and Recreational Goods and Supplies Merch
All Other Telecommunications	Flower, Nursery Stock, and Florists' Supplies Merc	Office Administrative Services	Other Social Advocacy Organizations	Sports and Recreation Instruction
All Other Telecommunications	Framing Contractors	Offices of Certified Public Accountants	Other Specialized Design Services	Stationery and Office Supplies Merchant Wholesaler
Appliance Repair and Maintenance	Freestanding Ambulatory Surgical and Emergency Cen	Offices of Lawyers	Other Support Activities for Air Transportation	Translation and Interpretation Services
Architectural Services	Graphic Design Services	Offices of Mental Health Practitioners (except Phy	Other Technical and Trade Schools	Travel Agencies
Architectural Services	Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	Offices of Other Holding Companies	Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Abuse Cente	Used Household and Office Goods Moving
Book Stores	Home Health Care Services	Offices of Physical, Occupational and Speech Thera	Painting and Wall Covering Contractors	Wholesale Trade Agents and Brokers
Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning Services	Human Resources Consulting Services	Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specia	Perishable Prepared Food Manufacturing	Women's Clothing Stores
Caterers	Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers	Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specia	Pet and Pet Supplies Stores	Women's, Children's, and Infants' Clothing and Acc
Child Day Care Services	Interior Design Services	Offices of Physicians, Mental Health Specialists	Pet Care (except Veterinary) Services	
Civic and Social Organizations	Internet Publishing and Broadcasting and Web Searc	Offices of Real Estate Agents and Brokers	Photography Studios, Portrait	
Civic and Social Organizations		Offices of Real Estate Appraisers		
Commercial and Institutional Building Construction		Other Accounting Services		
Computer Systems Design Services		Other Activities Related to Real Estate		