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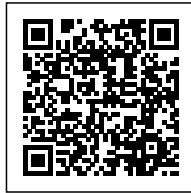
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TULARE APPROVES CHAMBER LEASE FOR BUSINESS INCUBATOR



Tulare Approves Two-Year Lease with Chamber for T-Biz Innovation Facility

The Tulare City Council voted to approve a two-year lease agreement with the Tulare Chamber of Commerce to occupy and manage portions of the new Tulare Business Innovation Zone (T-Biz) facility, a long-anticipated economic development project aimed at supporting local startups and small businesses.

While the lease ultimately passed, the conversation revealed tension over who controls access, how the facility will be maintained, and what role the public should have in a city-owned space.

A Vision for Economic Growth

The T-Biz building is part of a broader vision to create a local [business](#) incubator, offering affordable office space, resources, and support services for small and emerging businesses. The Chamber will serve as a key tenant and operator for the facility.

[City staff emphasized the space](#) will serve multiple purposes, with Police Department storage and use, Chamber operations, and shared access to community-focused services such as SBDC consulting, business watch programs, and a public-facing maker space.



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"This is a pilot program. We are trying this out for two years," city staff said. "We have made thoughtful compromises to create a space that benefits everyone."

Debate Over Janitorial Services

One of the key sticking points in the discussion was janitorial services. Some councilmembers argued that the entire building should be cleaned by city employees, citing the public nature of the space.

However, staff defended the current plan to contract with a female- and minority-owned small [business that has provided services to the city](#) for nearly a decade.

We are walking our talk on small [business development](#)," staff explained. "This is exactly the kind of business we are here to support."

Public Access or Private Use?

The [council also raised concerns about whether the community](#) room in the T-Biz building would truly be accessible to the public or function more as a restricted space for Chamber and Police Department use.

While staff noted that the room may be used for public-facing events, training, or occasional meetings, it was made clear that general public reservations would not be part of regular operations.

"If we are calling it a public space, the public should be able to use it," one councilmember said. "Right now, it sounds more like a semi-public space with limited access."

City officials promised flexibility and emphasized that the project is experimental, with plans to revisit its structure after the two-year trial period.

What Is Next?

The council included a provision in the lease approval to require a formal update 12 months after the building opens, projected around June 1, 2025, to assess operational performance,





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tenant use, costs, and [community engagement](#).

The lease passed with a split vote, with two councilmembers abstaining, but the majority supporting the initiative as a creative approach to economic development and city-chamber collaboration.