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Californian City Looks To Keep Its Factories Locally-Owned

**Darren Dahl**, CONTRIBUTOR*I chronicle the impact and management of employee-owned companies.* [FULL BIO](#) ✓

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[Project Equity](#) approached Kline and the City of Fremont with a plan to both understand the threat they faced with ageing business owners and also to help get the word out that there that employee ownership could be a viable succession plan for them. “We talk to a lot of businesses to try to dispel some of the myths they might have heard about employee ownership,” says Alison Lingane, who co-founded Project Equity in 2014. “We’re excited to work with the City of Fremont to try and have real conversations with business owners and get this option on the menu so that existing owners can make informed decisions about the future of their business. We know employee ownership isn’t for everyone, but it’s a great place to start.”

When Lingane and her team surveyed the manufacturing and supply chain sector in Fremont, they found that nearly 40% of the businesses were more than 20 years old—a good predictor that many of the owners of those businesses might be at the age to consider retirement and ready to put a succession plan in place.

The next step for Kline and Project Equity is to begin having those conversations with local business owners as a way to encourage them to keep their factories locally owned.

“We know that the businesses in our community have a passion for the work they do and that they are proud of the resurgence of manufacturing here in the U.S. and in the Bay Area,” says Kline, who has become a believer in the power of employee-owned businesses. “We have high hopes that those business owners want to figure out how they can leave a lasting legacy in our community by considering other management structures they might not have known about before.”

We'll check back soon with Kline and the City of Fremont to see how their outreach program has gone as well as with Lingane with Project Equity, who has begun working with other communities facing similar challenges like Long Beach to help build more awareness about the kinds of far-reaching benefits employee-owned companies can bring.