

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP LAUNCH

6/29/11

OMNI WILLIAM PENN HOTEL

Emily Anderson, PCRG and Rob Soroka, Huntington Bank offered brief welcoming remarks. Emily introduced the Business Development Working Group (BDWG).

Ann Dugan from the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence provided an overview of their new program "Inner City Power to Prosper." Describing the type of business owners they are seeking as class members as well as benefits the program offers.

- The program will run for 9 months beginning at a TBA date in late September.
- Will require a time commitment of roughly 10 hrs/wk.
- Seeking business who are not competitors
- Want diverse class members in terms of gender/race/size of business/location/etc.
- Cost is still TBD and partial scholarships will be available. The business owner must pay some of the cost so that he/she has "skin in the game"
- The program is seeking business owners who:
 - Are located in an inner city neighborhood in Pittsburgh
 - Have been in business at least 3 years
 - Have full time employees other than themselves
 - Generate at least \$300K in revenue
 - Are looking for new ways to sustain and grow their business

Following Ann were brief comments from Mark Lewis of the POISE Foundation and Ernie Hogan of PCRG.

Josette Fitzgibbons of the Urban Redevelopment Authority then ran a brief discussion of neighborhood markets based on a Commercial Market Value Analysis compiled by the URA. Mainstreet managers should already have this information, but Josette agreed to make it available to anyone in attendance who wanted it.

Roundtable: Where do we go from here?

After the presentations discussion was opened up to hear from all in attendance about where they would like to see the Business Development Working Group go from here and how they would like to function. Discussion was also open to comments about what neighborhoods, businesses, and business owners needed from banks and this working group.

Discussion of what businesses need:

The group brought up a number of ideas for what businesses need to continue to grow:

- Most popular idea was a “one stop shop” of business development resources that are available to small business owners. It was suggested that BDWG work to assemble this resource with listing of different agency programs, IE – SBA, URA, State of PA, etc.
- Tracey Evans of Wilkinsburg stressed the need to bring off the grid, non-traditional businesses into the fold, and not gentrify them out of the market.
- Group also suggested education on landlord/tenant law, especially lease negotiations for business owners. Both Pitt and Duquesne Law Schools offer legal clinics for landlord/tenant law.
- Secession planning for family businesses
- Boutique banking. Small-scale banks in neighborhoods, NOT electronic banking.
- Information session on business banking and what banks look for in traditional underwriting, credit, and gap financing (Dollar Bank did this in Wilkinsburg)
- What private equity funds are available, where are they available, how do businesses get them?
- Helping businesses understand the neighborhood market (or lack of market) for the services and products offered

Discussion of what BDWG should be involved in/look like moving forward

- It was suggested and agreed to that BDWG should aim to meet bi-monthly, but as is the case with the Community Development Working Group, meetings should only occur when there are action items or discussions worth having.
- Two policy discussions were mentioned: Port Authority service cuts and their effect on business districts to draw both customers and employees; and the increase in Parking fees and their effect on our business district. Ernie Hogan noted that PCRG is already involved in discussions on both of these issues and will continue to be.
- Group agreed that it would be good to involve small business owners in BDWG as a “grass-roots” voice for small businesses in the city. They are the individuals who can best inform BDWG of small business needs and current obstacles.