

WEST PHILADELPHIA 2015-2016 STATE OF SMALL BUSINESS REPORT

WEST PHILADELPHIA CORRIDOR COLLABORATIVE

May 3, 2016

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Letter from the President

Dear Stakeholders of the West Philadelphia Community,

Since August of 2015, under the banner of the West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative, I have engaged with businesses across West Philadelphia. I have worked with commercial corridor managers, business association executives and city officials vested in supporting businesses.

As I reflect on these brief seven months since our first meeting, I am proud of the progress we have made in supporting local businesses. We have created a forum for information-sharing and resource-sharing between business associations via our bi-monthly meetings. We have also begun to lay the groundwork so development in this community produces benefits for citizens through local hiring opportunities and procurement to local businesses. We have also spread information about procurement opportunities through our participating associations and have brought the pressing issues facing local businesses to the attention of city officials.

I am pleased to unveil this publication, our first public State of Small Business Report. This report outlines the top issues facing West Philadelphia and what our associations are doing to combat these issues. I hope this report will serve as a reference point for government officials and anchor institutions wishing to support local businesses.

I have enjoyed serving as the President of the West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative and I look forward to tackling these issues with you.

Sincerely,

Jabari K. Jones
President
May 3, 2016



PARTICIPATING ASSOCIATIONS

Lancaster Avenue 21st
Century Business
Association

Business Association of
West Parkside

Baltimore Avenue Business
Association

60th Street West Market
Business Association

American Association of
Blacks in Energy –
Philadelphia Chapter

Safety and Security

Safety and security concerns impact many of West Philadelphia's businesses. Businesses face issues with making commercial corridors a vibrant safe place for consumers to shop and for businesses to operate. These problems impact a corridor's ability to attract consumer traffic

Our Progress

Expanded awareness about the City of Philadelphia's Business Security Camera Program.

Introduced Business Watch Program, model from the Lancaster Avenue 21st Century Business Association whereby the association acts as an intermediary between the local police district and community

Proposed A Public Safety Committee that would be run by local business associations, proposed by the 60th Street West Market Business Association

Exploring partnerships to light up our corridors so businesses will feel safe to stay open later and consumers will feel safer to shop through a partnership with the Commerce Department to provide LED bulbs for street lights; partnership started by the Lancaster Avenue 21st Century Business Association.



Future Plans – What's Needed

More frequent police patrols of commercial corridors

Secure funding from the Commerce Department for Lancaster Avenue LED lighting and discuss whether the program can be expanded to other corridors

Advocate for more resources to help individuals with mental health issues that wander corridors

Business Incubation/Support Structures

Attracting new businesses to a commercial corridor is an action crucial for long-term economic growth. Many business associations struggle with being able to point prospective entrepreneurs to resources to assist their businesses. The lack of information about available resources is critical for the success of any new venture.

Our Progress

Announced a Call for Submissions that will allow business service providers to submit resources they provide for Business Association level officials as proposed by the Business Association of West Parkside



Developed relationships with local anchor institutions that have business consulting programs

Increased awareness of government resources to local businesses

Proposed Project Relevance, a consumer spend study to be conducted by an anchor institution that would be used to attract new businesses in West Philadelphia

Future Plans – What’s Needed

Creation of a single searchable, maintained, database on all resources for local businesses (sorted by free, discount, and general service providers)

Additional and affordable consulting services to local businesses such as the development of business plans, assisting with marketing strategy and Cash Flow

On-Board Process for new businesses that start in University-City area on ways to reach target student demographics

Partnerships with City, State, and private foundations to be better informed and able to provide information on Grant opportunities for local non-profit organizations

Explore how business associations can better create value for new businesses

Local Procurement

One of the West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative's key initiatives is facilitating local procurement between businesses in West Philadelphia and larger institutions like Universities and the City of Philadelphia. By employing bulk procurement strategies, businesses can receive contracts from large institutions, increasing their capacity, creating jobs, and increasing tax revenues for the City.

Our Progress

Prepared to launch a business association audit in May 2016 to determine the needs that businesses in West Philadelphia could potentially fulfill and guide the organization's contract acquisition strategy

Advocate for local procurement and hiring by serving on the Boards for development projects in West Philadelphia such as the 30th Street Station District

Begin designing program for contractor training to prepare local contractors to be skilled, certified and qualified to bid on major development contracts

Future Plans – What's Needed

Revenue-Generating opportunities to consult on local development projects to find local and minority contractors and businesses

Ways for the Corridor Collaborative and its participating associations to stay informed and involved of construction-related and development procurement opportunities in West Philadelphia

Prioritize local procurement for Universities and academic institutions, private corporations, and the City of Philadelphia.

Prioritize contractor training

Business Association Capacity Issues

Business Associations are an invaluable part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem of West Philadelphia. Many Associations are run by officials elected by their business constituents. Associations serve as the representatives of businesses in forming partnerships, staying abreast of relevant legislation, creating events to increase traffic to commercial corridors, and representing the interests of businesses to the City and other relevant political stakeholders. Business Associations in West Philadelphia are also struggling financially to continue providing such services.

Our Progress



Discuss and consider turning the Collaborative into a Business Improvement District to create bring revenue for staff and support services to commercial corridors

Raised issue of financial support to associations to various partners and stakeholders

Future Plans – What’s Needed

Advocate for more funding opportunities from the City of Philadelphia and the State of Pennsylvania

Look into partnerships with larger institutions that will provide financial support to business associations

Other Future Priorities

The West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative will also, as a collaborative engine look into the following partnership-related activities.

Future Priorities

Strengthen entrepreneurship education by partnering with youth programs in the West Philadelphia area to provide students the opportunity to speak and work with local business owners

Ensure local businesses in West Philadelphia benefit from increased traffic into the city from high scale events.

Expand “Buy Local” mindset by considering a conference on ways to make the benefits of supporting local businesses are in the minds of consumers

Form better relationships with commercial landlords to promote pop-up businesses in vacant spaces as proposed by the Baltimore Avenue Business Association and the Lancaster Avenue 21st Century Business Association

Strategic Initiatives

MISSION: The West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative is an organization dedicated to being an economic development engine that provides opportunity and growth to small business entrepreneurs across West Philadelphia. The organization is dedicated to fostering collaboration and unification between business groups and associations that represent major corridors in West Philadelphia

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

1. **INFORMATION- SHARING:** Facilitate the exchange of information and resources between business groups that represent major commercial corridors and small business constituents in West Philadelphia.
2. **COLLABORATION:** Collaboratively address issues facing businesses across West Philadelphia by forming partnerships with institutions, corporations and political entities.
3. **PROCUREMENT:** Advocate for local sustainable procurement in the form of small business contracts from local institutions, corporations and the City of Philadelphia
4. **ECONOMIC GROWTH:** Increase consumer traffic to local small businesses via special events and attract new and diverse businesses in West Philadelphia's commercial corridors.
5. **BUSINESS INCUBATION:** Support and organize resources for individuals that want to start small businesses in West Philadelphia. Emphasize increasing minority and women participation in entrepreneurship
6. **LOCAL AND MINORITY HIRING INITIATIVES:** Ensure minority and women participation in construction and other projects.
7. **ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION:** Support and organize opportunities to expose youth to entrepreneurship.

Concluding Remarks and Contacts

Thank you for reviewing our 2015-2016 State of Small Business Report. If you, or your organization are interested in partnering with us to tackle any of the issues presented here, please see our contact information below.

Contact

West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative

Lancaster Avenue 21st Century Business
Association

Business Association of West Parkside

Baltimore Avenue Business Association

American Association of Blacks in Energy

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