

The West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FY' 18-19

A Report on priorities of the West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative for
Fiscal Year 2018-2019

7-2-2018

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

2017 Highlights

105+

Young People we talked to about Entrepreneurship and how every young person has the capacity to create positive change today.

3

Number of New Business Associations joining the Collaborative, including the Haverford Avenue Business Association, Lansdowne Avenue Business Association and the 63rd Street Business Association

3

Years in Operation, the Collaborative celebrates its 3rd Year Anniversary on August 13, 2018

Dear Members, Stakeholders and Friends of the West Philadelphia Corridor Collaborative,

Since the very first day the concept of building this Collaborative was discussed, I've met so many passionate leaders taking significant steps to improve their communities.

Some are starting business associations in underrepresented areas of the City, others complete the Citizens Planning Institute to be more informed of the planning process. Neighborhoods are coming together in forming registered community organizations, to make sure residents have a say in the development of their communities. More and more, citizens are becoming involved in civic affairs, learning more about government, legislation, and the role ordinary citizens can play in shaping communities.

Being surrounded by so many talented community leaders, always on the path of self-improvement to be better informed to support their neighborhoods has personally inspired me to continue the great work we began on August 13, 2015, the work of strengthening our communities through entrepreneurship.

Throughout the last two years, one thing has been crystal clear to me. To thrive, every community needs an advocate. The very concept of a business association was founded on the principle that if businesses could pool together their diverse knowledge and some financial resources (membership dues), then they could create an overarching entity that would advocate for the concerns of the group at-large.

With exciting opportunities like Rebuild PHL, the development of Schuylkill Yards Project, an innovation District that sweeps to 43rd Street, and a shift to innovate and modernize business practices along commercial corridors upon us, our work is more important than ever.

It is my vision, reflected in the pages that follow, that this Collaborative will continue to be the advocate for the business community of West Philadelphia.

Sincerely,

Jabari K. Jones
President

PRIORITIES FY' 2018-2019

1. LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY

Legislation is a powerful external factor with the potential to disrupt business in West Philadelphia. Displayed prominently during the last fiscal year with the approval and passage of the Philadelphia Sweetened Beverage Tax, legislation regulating large and small establishment restaurant licenses, and the recent proposal by Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney calling for a six-percent raise in property taxes (ultimately rejected by Philadelphia City Council in the final budget) has indicated a clear need for the business community to remain informed of small business-related legislation. WPCC has prepared the following initiatives to respond to this need:

- A. **Legislative Updates** – Beginning July 1, WPCC will approve a new legislative arm that will provide business association leadership with legislative alerts when any legislation affecting small businesses and/or commercial corridors is introduced in Philadelphia City Council. WPCC will also encourage small business owners to testify in Council hearings on related legislation.
- B. **Legislative Reports** – Bi-Annually, WPCC will call for submissions of legislative priorities from business associations, to be delivered to legislators at all levels of government.

2. LOCAL OWNERSHIP ON COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

The future health of West Philadelphia's commercial corridors will be dependent on the owners of commercial property. As seen recently on the 3600 Block of Lancaster Avenue as it was acquired by a developer that will develop an entire block of commercial spaces formerly occupied by small businesses, ownership will be a defining factor in whether resident-owned small businesses will continue to populate our corridors. WPCC therefore proposes the following initiatives to promote and support local ownership:

- A. **Real-Estate Education** – WPCC will commit to partnering with organizations and individuals to provide real-estate education to assist small business owners in understanding the terms of their leases, negotiating rent-to-buy options, tangled titles, real-estate tax relief and financing available to assist in acquisition of property.
- B. **Financial Products for Real-Estate Acquisition** – WPCC will continue discussions already in progress with the Philadelphia Department of Commerce and local-area banks and financial institutions to develop financial products to assist small business owners in acquiring property.
- C. **Business-Led Investment in Real-Estate** – WPCC will seek to support medium/larger businesses in West Philadelphia with the financial capacity to invest in real-estate with education and other incentives.
- D. **Registered Community Organization Support** – WPCC will encourage business associations to become RCO's to have input and control over zoning changes and development along West Philadelphia corridors.

3. LOCAL PROCUREMENT AND HIRING

West Philadelphia is expected to see over \$20 Billion in investment over the course of the next forty years. This means hundreds and construction and development jobs, billions of dollars in contracts to be awarded and possibly thousands of corporate, professional and academic jobs to be created once developments are completed. WPCC, which sits in conversations related to nearly every large project in West Philadelphia proposes the following initiatives to assist the business community in benefiting from this investment:

- A. **Prioritization of Local Procurement** – Prioritize and advocate for procurement programs that will prioritize small businesses for procurement opportunities and eliminate policies that prevent local small businesses from accessing these new opportunities.
- B. **Local Hiring Initiatives** – Prioritize and advocate for programs that support local hiring of West Philadelphia residents. WPCC will seek to attract and partner with workforce development organizations that can provide relevant skill-based trainings for temporary and permanent jobs in West Philadelphia.
- C. **Business Capacity-Building** – WPCC will prioritize the creation of successful business capacity building programs that will assist small businesses in becoming competitive in seeking contracts.

4. PRE-STARTUP AND STARTUP TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

As indicated by business associations and residents in West Philadelphia, there is a lack of affordable, organized programming to support residents that are seeking to starting a new small business. To combat this lack of technical assistance in the marketplace, WPCC will pursue the following initiatives

- A. **Startup and Pre-Startup Technical Assistance Events** – WPCC will commit to provide 50 hours of workshops, seminars and other educational events delivered individually or in partnership with other organizations to small business owners on topics related to starting a business
- B. **SAFE-START Program** – WPCC will create and launch by January 1, 2019, a program to aid both new and existing small business owners that are testing new business ideas and assumptions. Under the umbrella of the program, small business owners in each cohort will be able to define and create projects under advisement from local business leaders.

5. WEST PHILADELPHIA BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM SUPPORT

Every successful small business ecosystem requires strong, capable small business leaders. By request of select business leaders in West Philadelphia, WPCC will provide the following initiatives to building a strong ecosystem of leaders:

- A. **Business Leadership Training:** WPCC will facilitate with partners to create programs for West Philadelphia business association leaders on topics such as community leadership, non-profit management and economic development
- B. **Business Organization Capacity Building:** WPCC will engage in activities to support capacity-building of participating business associations.
- C. **Tourism:** WPCC will prioritize highlighting the diversity of our neighborhoods, especially the rich culture of Southwest Philadelphia for purposes of increasing and attracting tourism to West Philadelphia neighborhoods. WPCC also will participate in the City's World Heritage Activities sponsored by Global Philadelphia to ensure West Philadelphia is properly highlighted.
- D. **Global Partnerships:** WPCC will seek to establish global partnerships to assist businesses with import/export activities. WPCC will cultivate global partnerships and host dialogue with international representatives for the exchange of knowledge.

