

I. Workforce Development Strategies

At the February 2011 meeting, stakeholders expressed an interest in workforce development strategies used to support neighborhood revitalization and the retention of small and local businesses. A summary of two organizations' track records in fostering and retaining local businesses is outlined below.

Case Studies of Combined Housing and Workforce Development Strategies

California's Fruitvale Transit Village. Fruitvale is one of a dozen neighborhoods in Oakland, California. It is a predominantly low-income Latino and Chicano community. The Unity Council created the Fruitvale Development Corporation to develop the local economy around the BART station in Fruitvale, which was anticipating the construction of a new parking garage to service the station. The Unity Council is a community development corporation with close ties to the city of Oakland. Today it serves as a delegate agency that manages many city programs, such as HeadStart and senior centers. It has built up a reputation as a housing and community developer. Its overall orientation is to promote high density mixed uses, housing, jobs, and retail but with a focus on distributing jobs centers. The community sought to develop proactively implement solutions for managing traffic, pollution, and impacts on local business that the traffic from the garage might bring (Grady and Leroy, 2006). In addition to building mixed-use infill development around the BART, the Unity Council started a Public Market small business incubator program in Fruitvale that supports small business programs and local artisans.

MAPC spoke with Jeff Pace, Vice President of Finance and Business Operations at the Unity Council to learn more about the Council's workforce development strategies particularly pertaining to local/small business retention. He noted that Oakland as a city has an anti-big box store culture so the city has not had to manage any real interest from big box stores. In addition, he noted, current available sites are not accommodating because they are not big lots. The Unity Council's focus on small business retention grows out of its holistic approach to servicing the community. The Public Market builds on its prior work in starting a Main Streets program in the 1990s that largely served immigrant-owned businesses. Activities included litter and graffiti reduction programs, education and assistance on business signage and overall beautification, and negotiating with the city to implement tax assessments that provided funding for cleaning. As of 2011, Fruitvale has seen a 10-20% increase in businesses by microentrepreneurs.

Jeff also advised to other communities considering a workforce and housing strategy near transit to consider a healthy dose of affordable housing at 15-40% of units in a structure and that concentrating too much subsidized section 8 housing near transit can create dead zones. He advised mixing in affordable housing to ensure that amenities look and feel good enough for market rate housing in order to meet the area's tax revenue needs.¹

Seattle's Urban Enterprise Center. The Seattle Chamber of Commerce established the Urban Enterprise Center (UEC), a nonprofit affiliate with ties to the business community, which focuses on the Central Area. UEC held a retreat with Central Area leaders to discuss community needs. The

¹ Personal communication with Jeff Pace, Vice President of Finance and Business Operations, The Unity Council, April 2011.

primary issue identified was the lack of jobs. To work with the program, businesses have to offer a yearly salary of at least \$20,000 along with benefits. UEC works with the Employment Security Office to identify potential employees and get them job-ready before matching them with employers. With financial support from the Ford Foundation and private businesses, UEC has funded community-based organizations to help develop businesses. New businesses are required to hire 50 percent of their workforce from the local community. Graduate students from the University of Washington provide businesses with marketing and accounting assistance so that they might remain competitive as larger chains locate nearby (Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce, 2011).