

Business and Economic Sustainability Committee
Southside Vision 20/20
NOTES

March 19, 2019

ATTENDANCE: Gail Mrowinski, Tom Stine

STAFF: Anna Smith, Juliana Bolivar

Challenges Starting a Business in Bethlehem

Tom mentioned that he attended the Southside Arts District's mixer on Monday, and he spoke with several entrepreneurs who have had challenges navigating the City's processes to start businesses. He asked if staff had seen similar issues with businesses, and Juliana mentioned that several changes at City Hall have made it much more difficult to get information quickly. After the departure of Sara Bukowiec, there is no longer a designated point person to help business owners navigate the process of getting started. In addition, the departure of the zoning officer and changes in inspectors have led to long waits for information on use of properties. Staff hope that the City will be filling positions shortly, but until then, there will continue to be significant challenges for anyone starting a business in Bethlehem.

Start Your Business Spring 2019

Anna mentioned that the success of the January networking event led to a record enrollment in Business Basics. Forty-six participants attended at least one session, and 28 completed the module. Juliana explained that the module has worked well as a filter for individuals who may not be sure if they are ready to start a business. Some decided to wait, while those who are serious about pursuing their idea are much more likely to take Marketing.

Business Resources

The committee discussed CADCB's relationships with other business development organizations in the area, such as the SBDC, NCC's CIE, and SCORE. Members discussed the importance of communication between organizations and a clear understanding of exactly what each organization does in order to increase referrals between organizations. Tom mentioned that 1 Million Cups has been a good event to bring individuals together from different business development circles. Juliana mentioned that staff have identified areas where additional support could be used, such as resources on intellectual property or contracts. Currently, no organization is specializing in providing these services. Tom offered to reach out to some lawyers to see if they would be interested in engaging with CADCB in some capacity.

Southside Vision Proposals 2019-2020

The committee briefly discussed the two proposals to be submitted for funding for Southside Vision program year 2019-2020. Committee members agreed that the networking events should continue, as well as the successful Southside Ambassadors extension.

Networking Event – June 2019

Gail will confirm that the CIE will be available for the networking event on June 20.

The next meeting will be held on April 16 at 8:15 am in the first floor conference room of the Forte building.