

## **Atlanta BeltLine Partnership Employment Advisory Group Meeting Notes – December 13, 2010**

### **Participants:**

- Aaron Uddin, *Blue earth network*
- Akhil Chhabra, *Goizueta Business School*
- Burrell Billingslea, *Fulton County Workforce Development (former)*
- Charles Edwards, *Atlanta Center for Self Sufficiency*
- Charles Sterne, *United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta*
- Derrick Duckworth, *Atlanta BeltLine Chamber of Commerce*
- Elke Davidson, *Davidson Consulting*
- Faye Dresner, *Year-Up*
- Garry Harris, *Center for Sustainable Communities*
- Harold Craig, *Atlanta Technical College*
- Linda Schneider, *Jewish Family & Career Services*
- Liz Coyle, *Atlanta BeltLine Network/Atlanta BeltLine Chamber of Commerce*
- Melissa Conrad, *Georgia STAND-UP/MAC Consulting*
- Oluyemi Yikealo, *West End Merchants Coalition*
- Otis Hillsman, *Atlanta Center for Self Sufficiency*
- Peter Roberts, *Goizueta Business School*
- Rob Brawner, *Atlanta BeltLine Partnership*
- Robyn Cohen, *Jewish Family & Career Services*
- Rodney Ellis, *Atlanta Technical College*
- Rosalia Arora, *Goizueta Business School*
- Rukiya Eaddy, *Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.*
- Stu Lipkin, *Goizueta Business School*
- Toni Sargeant, *Goizueta Business School*
- Valarie Wilson, *Atlanta BeltLine Partnership*
- Von Nkosi, *City of Atlanta/Southface*
- Warren Pincomb, *Atlanta Technical College*
- Willie Palmer, *Georgia Power*

### **Goals of the Meeting**

The goals of the meeting were as follows:

1. Emory MBA students present research conducted since the September meeting
2. Group discussion of the research
3. Brainstorm key issue areas for further investigation
4. Assess group members' interest in participating in this initiative during 2011 and beyond.

To briefly review, at the first meeting of the Atlanta BeltLine Employment Advisory Group, participants were introduced to the initiative and brainstormed some key questions and issues to explore. In addition, they were introduced to a group of Emory MBA students who would be doing initial research to set the stage for the group's efforts. The students committed to performing a literature review on workforce development efforts, particularly those efforts focused on particular *places* as well as populations and sectors. In addition the students interviewed key private sector employers around the Atlanta BeltLine to investigate how businesses currently "source" talent to fill jobs, as well as identifying potential challenges for local business to create pipelines from Atlanta BeltLine neighborhoods.

## **Emory Presentation**

The students next presented their research (*see attached power-point and executive summary*). They discussed their goals and their research methodology, as well as some of the key arguments for a local hiring strategy. Their presentation included a section on their *key findings*, a discussion of pertinent *best practices*, and a brief overview of *incentives for targeted hiring*. Finally, they presented a series of recommendations for a set of centralized offerings that facilitate the job connection process, including the following components (“Atlanta BeltLine Sourcing Solution” a.k.a. ABLiSS):

- Create a structure (virtual/physical) to provide a clear identity for BeltLine employers;
- Foster strategic partnerships then leverage to aggregate information in this central location;
- Create a marketing channel to promote BeltLine businesses;
- Provide a centralized HR sourcing solution for participating BeltLine employers.

## **Group Discussion**

The group had a spirited discussion of the research findings, identifying key issues, highlighting key benefits, and developing a basic frame-work for organizing the committee’s work moving forward. The agreed-upon work categories are listed below, and specific group concerns have been clustered under these categories when possible. These categories are not meant to be exhaustive, rather to serve as a platform for work in 2011:

## **Refining Scope**

- **Defining “the BeltLine” geographically:** Are we looking at businesses/populations inside the TAD only? X # of miles/census tracts outside the BeltLine?
- Do we want to create a system that involves businesses and residents *not yet* located in the BeltLine, however we define it?
- How can we create a system that will attract both educated users and those marginal populations that don’t access traditional points of entry (web, newspaper, social media, institutional communications, etc.)?
- Strategies for:
  1. **EXISTING BUSINESSES**
  2. **GROWING EXISTING BUSINESSES**
  3. **RECRUITING BUSINESSES TO THE BELTLINE FROM ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION**

#### 4. **BUSINESSES BY SIZE**

#### 5. **BUSINESSES BY SECTOR**

- BeltLine construction jobs (48,000) vs. secondary jobs (30,000): different systems for talent development, job placement?

#### Defining Benefits

- Making money for businesses: how does this effort help the bottom line?
- Reduced HR costs – free up non-HR staff from dealing with searches
  1. Larger businesses already doing long-term planning re: staffing
  2. Smaller businesses employ a range of “seat of the pants” HR practices
- Reduced training costs
- Increased retention: locally hired staff have fewer transportation issues, greater job satisfaction
- Find **EARLY ADOPTERS**: identify potential benefits and test them in real time with existing businesses. Criteria for selection?
- Find **ANCHOR EMPLOYERS in each quadrant of the BeltLine and use them to test/market the model**. This will influence smaller businesses in general, as well as through their supply chain
- Build the **VALUE PROPOSITION** for local hiring: businesses in Emory survey don’t see it currently.
- Use the **BELTLINE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** to spread the word about the benefits of this new initiative. Link benefits to chamber membership.
- Need to **EDUCATE LOCAL EMPLOYERS ABOUT BENEFITS OF BELTLINE BRAND** – increased consumer awareness, association with “buy local” movement, smart growth association, good community citizen, etc.

#### Incentives

- Will additional incentives (beyond benefits identified above) be necessary to get BeltLine businesses involved?
- If so, what is **AVAILABLE**: BeltLine TAD dollars cannot be used. Existing Workforce dollars? Other tax deductions?
- Emory research found that incentives focused on **EMPLOYER** were more effective than those focused on **EMPLOYEES**

#### Business Model

- Will services be provided for free? If so, how to subsidize?
- Will services be provided for a fee? If so, how to set?
- Will services be provided as a condition of (paid) membership in the BeltLine Chamber?
- Other?

#### Program Models

- Place-based workforce development – smaller scale than nation/state/city-wide (see: base-conversion efforts, etc.)
- Human capital initiatives linked to job placement: support services to increase retention. First 3 months most critical: increased income makes new worker ineligible for benefits, not yet enough to compensate for those benefits
- Center for Working Families – Atlanta, GA
- **CREATE NEW BUSINESS INCUBATOR:** recruit businesses with high-wage/high-growth jobs – link incubator benefits to local hiring strategy
- ABLiSS similar to services that existing staffing firms/programs provide – can we leverage?
  1. Jewish Family and Career Services?
  2. Private firm?

### Data

- Emory students used Atlanta Development Authority data as base for their survey (based on business license info – date?), and found it of limited value. **HOW CAN WE GET CLEAN, UP-TO-DATE DATA DESCRIBING BUSINESSES AROUND THE BELTLINE? BeltLine Chamber survey? Other?**

### Internal Communications

- How can we utilize ABI/ABLP communications in our efforts to create, market and operationalize this initiative?

### External Communications

- How can we access, not compete with, existing job matching services (Craig’s List, Monster.com, Yahoojobs.com, etc.)?
- **BEYOND.COM:** for-profit company that helps build on-line niche job-boards
- **LINK TO EXISTING BUY LOCAL CAMPAIGNS:** locovore movement, green economic development focused on supply-chain issues, neighborhood-supporting purchasing efforts, etc.

### Existing Systems/Stakeholders

- Need to get **ATLANTA/FULTON COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP INVOLVED**
- Metro Chamber vs. Beltline Chamber: competition? synergy?
- **ABI economic development agenda:**
  1. Do they have one? How can we link our efforts to it/use our efforts to influence it?
  2. Up to \$100 million in TAD dollars available for economic development – has it been committed? Time-frame? Is workforce development an approved activity?
- **ABI tracking re: their Equitable Development Plan**
  1. Local hiring is a key metric
  2. Ford Foundation interest in the EDP?

### Perception/Awareness

- Business perception of the BeltLine – low confidence/limited value
- Business perception of the 45 n’hoods impacted by the BeltLine (100% low-income)
- Business perception of the residents of BeltLine n’hood (ditto)
- Role of local hiring in corporate social responsibility efforts
- Need to create a brand around BeltLine businesses (most don’t know who their “corporate neighbors” are around the different regions of the BeltLine)

### Conclusion and Next Steps

When asked, all the group members indicated their interest in continuing to work on this initiative in 2011. One member noted that while “we don’t have to re-invent the wheel” as there were many existing systems and programs to coordinate with, we would need one organization to drive the process forward. Atlanta BeltLine Partnership staff confirmed that they were committed to being that force – convening meetings, providing facilitation, supporting additional research if necessary, and bringing in critical experts and information when required.

The group agreed that the overall initiative has two major components:

1. Stream-lining and strengthening the recruitment/training/retention systems for BeltLine businesses; and
2. Workforce development efforts focused on residents of BeltLine neighborhoods, with a specific focus on marginalized populations (low-income, formerly incarcerated, formerly homeless, etc.)

The group agreed it was a necessary challenge moving forward to integrate this concern for helping local businesses’ bottom-lines with the poverty alleviation/human capital goals of the workforce developers.

The group agreed to meet again during January or February of 2011.