

Brooklyn Community Board 9
890 Nostrand Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11225

Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
September 10, 2024

Attendance (Board Members): Vanessa Raptopoulos, Committee Chair; Jolee Cobb; Lisa Etienne; Joseph Volney

Attendance (Community Resident Members): Zalman Chayo; Anthony Gay; Louisa Higgins; Shalisha Johnson;

Absent (Board Members): Cat Buccello, Jean Rene Mbeng Nguema

Absent (Community Resident Members)

Guests: Nicolas Almonor, CB9; Fred Baptiste (Ex-Officio); Claudia Kohn, Bridge Street Development Corp.; Tiara Robinson, Bridge Street Development Corp.

CB9 Staff: Dante B. Arnwine, District Manager

I. Overview

- a. The meeting focused on the formation and goals of the CB 9 Economic Development Committee. Key points included the success of a previous business owner breakfast with 30 attendees and the need for more targeted events. The committee discussed the importance of identifying the district's unique identity and the challenges of engaging local businesses. Tiara from Bridge Street Corp presented the Commercial District Needs Assessment (cDNA) for Crown Heights, highlighting the need for a Merchants Association on Utica Avenue. The committee also brainstormed ideas for future events, including resource fairs and business directories, to support local businesses and improve community engagement.

II. Introductions and Backgrounds of New Members

- a. Vanessa, owner of a gift shop on Flatbush and a new member of the community board.
- b. Jolie, shares her background of moving from California to the neighborhood and her involvement in the community board.
- c. Speaker 3, from Crown Heights, expresses a desire to make an impact in the neighborhood.
- d. Anthony Gay, discusses his long-term residency in the area and his interest in Entrepreneurship
- e. Shalisha, introduces herself as a new resident and volunteer coordinator, interested in serving the community.

III. Community Board Activities and Events

- a. Speaker 1 recounts the success of the business owner breakfast held in June, with 30 attendees and positive feedback.
- b. Discussion on the need for more events and the challenge of timing, with suggestions for different types of events like happy hours.
- c. Speaker 12 emphasizes the importance of identifying the district's identity and how it can be leveraged for business owners.
- d. Speaker 9 suggests that business owners found the forum valuable despite initial stress and appreciated the opportunity to network.
- e. Speaker 15 questions the objective of the event and suggests that it was successful in building relationships among business owners.

IV. Challenges and Suggestions for Future Events

- a. Speaker 1 and Speaker 9 discuss the challenges of timing and the need for different types of events to accommodate various schedules.
- b. Speaker 15 suggests that the event should be more targeted to specific business corridors to increase participation.
- c. Speaker 12 proposes that future events should be scheduled earlier in the year to retain interest and participation.
- d. Speaker 1 and Speaker 9 discuss the importance of location and the need to consider different areas for future events.
- e. Speaker 12 emphasizes the need for better communication and more seamless information sharing among business owners.

V. Guest Speakers: Bridge Street Corp's Commercial District Needs Assessment (CDNA)

- a. Speaker 1 introduces Tiara and Claudia from Bridge Street Corp, who are working on revitalizing Utica Avenue.
- b. Speaker 18, Tiara, explains the CDNA project, which includes surveys of merchants and consumers to identify needs in the neighborhood.
- c. The project aims to establish a Merchants Association on Utica Avenue, with a focus on sanitation, safety, and marketing.
- d. Speaker 18 highlights the success of similar projects in other neighborhoods, including the formation of Merchants Associations and hosting events.
- e. The CDNA report is available on the SBS website, and copies will be available at the next meeting.

VI. Challenges and Strategies for Establishing a Merchants Association

- a. Speaker 18 discusses the challenges of getting businesses to participate, including lack of time and capacity.
- b. The goal is to get four core businesses to form the executive team and start meetings, with the hope of eventually incorporating the association.
- c. Speaker 18 emphasizes the importance of unified voices in community board meetings and the benefits of showing up as a group.
- d. The association will not charge membership dues initially, and businesses will be encouraged to participate in the Summer Youth Program for free labor.
- e. Speaker 18 suggests reaching out to elected officials and other institutions to help promote the association and increase participation.

VII. Discussion on Community Engagement and Resource Sharing

- a. Speaker 12 raises concerns about the challenges of engaging businesses, especially those with limited English proficiency.
- b. Speaker 18 suggests starting with established businesses and newer businesses, as they are often more receptive to joining the association.
- c. Speaker 9 questions the cost of joining the association and the role of elected officials in supporting the initiative.
- d. Speaker 13 suggests reaching out to elected officials and using their newsletters to promote the association and its benefits.
- e. Speaker 18 highlights the importance of having a clear message and offering tangible benefits, such as free marketing and access to resources.

VIII. Ideas for Future Events brainstorming session:

- a. Business resource fairs and meet-and-greets for specific business corridors.
- b. A quarterly newsletter to summarize important information and make it more accessible to businesses.
- c. Using platforms like Linktree and Discord to organize information and make it easier for businesses to access.

IX. Final Thoughts and Next Steps

- a. Speaker 1 emphasizes the importance of connecting businesses and promoting collaboration within the community.
- b. Speaker 15 stresses the need for a clear mission statement and goals for the committee, focusing on business support and consumer empowerment.
- c. Speaker 7 suggests raising issues like rent increases and safety concerns with elected officials to address broader community needs.
- d. Speaker 13 proposes organizing business crawls and highlighting specific businesses throughout the year to increase visibility and support.
- e. Speaker 14 suggests following up with businesses that attended previous events to understand their needs and tailor future initiatives accordingly.
- f. Goals for next meeting would be to calendar out events we want to put on.

X. Adjourn