

Partners for a Prosperous Athens  
Entrepreneurship Sub-Committee  
October 16, 2006

In attendance: Timothy Evans, Gershon Teffe-Addo, John, Kelly Girtz, Catherine Hogue, Jim Geiser, Andy Herod, Carol McDonell, Carey Colquitt, Shannon McBride, Delene Porter

Carol McConnell talked about SBDC- They work with both start-up and existing for-profits in the area.

- Biggest barriers she sees facing entrepreneurs is capital, especially small amounts and banks want collateral.
- You have to have good credit, your own money to invest, or collateral for a loan.
- SBDC offers classes on starting businesses- they do charge \$49
- 2/3 of their clients are existing businesses
- SBDC offers continuing education and free consulting
- East Athens Development Corporation works with people- 8 week course that costs less than SBDC and they have a revolving loan fund
- Goodwill Industries- Elisha Battle- offers low-cost course on writing a business plan and have a Spanish speaker
- Athens Clarke Growth Fund through the Department of Human and Economic Development offers gap financing, they work with SBDC
- Some SBDC clients are looking at starting home-based businesses that do not require a lot of capital to start- jewelry, landscaping, cleaning
- SBDC serves businesses of all sizes and has helped secure funding from thousands of dollars to millions and who have businesses from cleaning services to high tech
- What kind of businesses does Athens need? SBDC has a Business Potential Analysis by county that would offer one perspective on what is needed
- Do any clients come to SBDC as groups? Usually SBDC serves individuals
- Does SBDC go out into the community to recruit? Usually clients come to SBDC
- Most of the clients come from Clarke County

There is a need to develop the ideas that high schools students come up with

Need locally embedded businesses- businesses that buy from and sell to other local businesses

Small Mart Revolution

Group looked at the notes from the September 25<sup>th</sup> meeting and two recommendations began to form:

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Create a program to teach entrepreneurialism at each level of the youth educational system. Partners: Chamber of Commerce, School District

- K-5- Integrate a financial literacy program, Use the Lemonade Stand competition (like Inc. Magazine)
- Middle School- Hold a Business Proposal Fair like a Science Fair, offer apprenticeships with local businesses, and have a Super Summer Program- where youth shadow a local business person for the summer.
- High School- Have students go through the SBDC course for class credit, continue the Business Proposal Fair

## RECOMMENDATION 2:

Foster entrepreneurship and remove barriers to small business development in Athens-Clarke County. Partners: Chamber of Commerce, University of Georgia, SBDC, EADC, Goodwill Industries, Athens Clarke Growth Fund

- Have three entry points to help adults become entrepreneurs
  - Identify areas for potential business start-ups (Organic Farming, SBDC's Business Potential Analysis) and recruit people to create businesses in these areas
  - Recruit/form groups- rather than focus solely on individuals, seek out self-created groups and offer to help with their business ideas
  - Individuals- create a user friendly process that recruits people who are not accessing SBDC or other local resources- create fast-track process to overcome their barriers to starting businesses
  - Offer an apprenticeship program both locally and through out country so that people can apply real-life knowledge to their start-up
  - Have a "case manager" who can work with each businesses start up and pull in resources as needed
  - Stream Line Education process and hold a support group- acct, tax, real estate for one meeting a month, education on with-holding taxes
- Incubators- paying rent and having no one to ask questions of are barriers to starting a business. Create Incubators in several locations around town so that several small businesses can work together; share information, equipment, liability insurance; have visits from accountants, IT, "case manager;" could money come from TADs?
- Zoning issues
  - Signage
  - Need an advocate- someone to help navigate zoning restrictions
- Tax issues
  - Could something be done about the high cost of property taxes on inventory?
  - Business Occupation tax- business license is expensive if you have more than one employee- may be able to reduce fees?
  - On the issue of federal taxes on a businesses profits- Corporation Sub-section S- education on what can be done to help profits be reinvested in small businesses
  - Could businesses have a homestead exemption tax if they own the building?
  - Want solutions that don't just re-distribute the tax burden
- Community Investing
  - Education and Engagement program to get local Banks focused on supporting small businesses- look at SBA Express Loans-New Markets
  - Look into creating a Local Stock Market where investors can put money into local businesses
  - Venture Capital Fund