

Recap of the East Town Business Partnership Business Forum
Thursday, October 18, 2018, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Open Book, 1011 Washington Avenue South, Target Performance Hall
Downtown East Neighborhood of Minneapolis

Welcome and Announcements

Dan Collison, Executive Director of the East Town Business Partnership, welcomed the audience to what he facetiously referred to as the October “mighty MEA (<https://www.educationminnesota.org/events/2018/October/18/Minnesota-Educator-Academy>)” business forum due to the absence of many Board members and constituents; he extended gratitude for their setting aside the time to attend the day’s event.

He advised the Business Forum Committee puts a lot of intention into the flow of the year and the topics covered so that they are timely and strategic to the unfolding narrative of what East Town is becoming and as it relates to the rest of downtown. The business forum season is established in advance and the topics chosen are presented by a cross-sector of industry leaders, information for which can be found on the ETBP website at <https://easttownmpls.org/2018-2019-business-forum-series/>.

Furthermore, the ETBP is wrapping up its renewal campaign and he thanked those who have renewed. Chris Fleck is Chair of the Membership, Marketing, and Communication Committee which offers opportunities for organizations to promote and showcase their businesses at the business forums via: (1) as the Presenting Sponsor when it is not a joint forum with the Minneapolis Downtown Council; and (2) as one up to three Exhibitor Tables. For more information about these opportunities, contact Fleck at info@easttownmpls.org.

Then the audience was asked to introduce themselves:

- John Bartzen, Denison Parking
- Lynn Burn, Keller Williams Realty, Grant Park resident
- Robert Clapp, Bridgewater Lofts resident
- Doug Craven, Bridgewater Lofts resident
- Rick Crispino, Bridgewater Lofts resident
- Chris DeLaurentis, Inner City Christian Ministries Life Center
- Chris Fleck, North Central University
- Kim Forbes, MN Adult and Teen Challenge
- Daniel Gumnit, People Serving People
- Laurel Hansen, Metropolitan Alliance of Connected Communities
- Tyler Hannah, North Central University Enactus, 8-bit Rex
- Cyndy Harrison, Sawatdee Thai Restaurant
- Tom Hayes, Hennepin Healthcare
- Cory Johnson, Mill City Summer Opera
- Mary Kaeding, Kraus-Anderson, on behalf of John Campobasso
- Julia Lauwagie, MN Adult and Teen Challenge
- Shannon Leech, Izzy’s Ice Cream
- Scott Murlowski, Steelcase Education, MDC Member
- Jeremy Phillips, North Central University
- Roger Raina, Regional Money Services Businesses Association, MDC
- Melanie Rennie, Denison Parking, MDC
- Christie Rock Hantge, ETBP Staff, accompanied by son Jack
- Braden Scheeler, Bobby & Steve’s Auto World
- Jeff Sommers, Izzy’s Ice Cream
- Carletta Sweet, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
- Zoe Thiel, City of Minneapolis, Manager of Small Business Team
- Rosemary Ugboajah, Neka Creative
- Paul Verrette, House of Charity

Deb Waterbury, Abittan Mill City
Kelly Zelna, Izzy's Ice Cream

Collison then extended a special gratitude to the platinum sponsors:

- Allied Parking
- American Academy of Neurology
- CenterPoint Energy
- Clear Channel Outdoor
- Community Housing Development Corporation
- Delta Dental
- ESG Architects
- Hennepin Healthcare
- House of Charity
- Kraus-Anderson
- Minnesota Vikings
- NRG Energy
- Padilla
- People Serving People
- Thrivent Financial
- U.S. Bank
- Sherman-Williams
- Wells Fargo

The ETBP is a small budget, inclusive and accessible organization whose contributions it receives from all its members help to fund its programming and staff. For those interested in a deep dive of the \$3 billion reinvestment narrative that occurred in East Town since the construction of U.S. Bank Stadium – a shocking surprise to those locally, regionally and nationally – he'll be happy to share some of this information with you via email. The role of the ETBP is to help build the community within those redevelopment narratives. Then he highlighted the following events in which to plug into the many layers of the community that are listed chronologically:

- Fall 2018: Registration is now open for the 2018-2019 Economic Gardening program which provides scholarships to owners of second stage growth businesses for business research combined with peer learning and business forums (<https://www.hennepin.us/business/work-with-hennepin/co/economic-development/>);
- Wednesdays, October 17-November 7, 5:00-6:00 pm: Coffee with Ward 3 Council Member Steve Fletcher at various locations downtown (<https://www.facebook.com/events/344466852764203/>);
- Thursday, October 18, 5:00-8:00 pm: Elliot Park Art Walk (<https://mplsdowntown.com/event/elliott-park-art-walk/2018-10-18/>) beginning with Happy Hour at Finnegans Brewery;
- Saturday, October 20, 11:30 am-1:00 pm: Eye Am You Mural Reveal presented by Weidner Apartment Homes at 1400 Park Avenue with refreshments by Segue Coffee Minneapolis and live music;
- Wednesday, October 31, 2:00-4:00 pm: NCAA Final Four Informational Event at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1200 Marquette Avenue;
- November 9-18, various times: Performances of The Miracle Worker at North Central University (<https://www.northcentral.edu/events/the-miracle-worker/>);
- Thursday, November 15, 11:30 am-1:00 pm: ETBP business forum on *What is the Difference Between Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?* with four powerful panelists and spotlight of Greater MSP Inclusion Toolkit at the Finnovation Lab/Impact Hub MSP (<https://easttownmpls.org/4061-2/>);
- November 19-January 16, 5:00-8:00 pm: Minnesota Indoor Stadium Running at U.S. Bank Stadium (<https://runmdra.org/programs/indoor-stadium-running/>);

- November 30-December 2: Performances of Songs of the Season at North Central University (<https://www.northcentral.edu/events/songs-of-the-season-7/>);
- Friday, December 7, time TBD: Hennepin Healthcare's Light up the Night at (<https://www.hennepinhealthcare.org/hennepin-healthcare-foundation/light-up-the-night/>);
- To learn more about and attend the neighborhood organizations' meetings:
 - Visit <http://www.thedmna.org/> for the DMNA Land Use Committee and Board meetings; and
 - Visit <http://elliottparkneighborhood.org/> for EPNI Building, Land Use and Housing (BLUH) and Livability Task Force meetings.

Collison encouraged the audience to send him information to promote their events at these business forums.

- **The Joys and Burdens of Starting and Building a Business in Minneapolis**

A. Spotlight on City of Minneapolis Small Business Team. Zoe Thiel, Manager of the Small Business Team (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/zoe-thiel-664166b4>) advised this is her second time before an ETBP business forum (the first being the December 19th business forum on Innovative Business Models + Start Ups). After few hands were raised when asked who has heard about the SBT or interacted directly with them, Thiel noted there is an opportunity for growth.

In 2018, the SBT directly assisted 271 business owners and entrepreneurs with their questions and issues related to the City. These inquiries and requests for support cover a broad range of issues and may cross over multiple departments. She encouraged those who don't know whom to contact, to consider the SBT as the primary point of contact and intake on issues as they have relationships across the organization with City staff, CPED, Regulatory Services, Health, Public Works, etc., and are happy to conduct research and figure out the answer. Her colleagues at the City are great and they want to help you with your business.

They have office hours at libraries and opportunity centers across the city, the days and times to which and other resources can be found on the Small Business Portal at <https://business.minneapolismn.gov/>. They have also conducted proactive outreach by simply walking down the street and visiting businesses to let them know they exist. They have partnered with the Civil Rights Department to talk about the new Minneapolis labor standards that impact small businesses.

If interested in learning more about SBT, they can be reached at smallbusiness@minneapolismn.gov and 612-673-2499 (BIZZ). Then she distributed a softcover *Plan. Launch. Grow. Your Guide to Operating a Small Business in the City of Minneapolis*.

B. Spotlight on Vacant Retail Pop-up Initiative. Rosemary Ugboajah, Founder of Neka Creative, explained she responded to Collison's request to speak about this joint initiative between the ETBP and the MDC which directly relates to starting a small business and designed to bring economic prosperity for all.

Although downtown has lost some key retail anchors – some have rebounded while others not so much – there are still some great opportunities occurring that will help to reinvigorate and fill vacant retail spaces downtown, e.g., the long-term renovation and redevelopment of Nicollet Mall, the growth of the downtown population with more to come along with the growth of the sports and entertainment districts, and more hotels opening in downtown. But there's another trend occurring on which the needle hasn't moved, i.e., the economic disparity gap between people of color and their white counterparts.

As a consequence, Collison mobilized the resources from the Carlson Consulting Enterprise via a grant from the McKnight Foundation, and the City's Great Streets Business District Support grant

to undertake a study to understand the retail market, identify initiatives to revitalize downtown retail, and leverage vacant downtown retail and commercial space into business opportunities for emerging, small and minority-owned businesses. The solution proposed from that study was to support the continued development of a vibrant downtown as well as emerging, women- and minority-led businesses by creating an incubator program.

The incubator program/vacant storefront pop-up initiative was launched in July and seven areas of work were established: (1) Real Estate and Site Selection; (2) Brand and Marketing Development; (3) Channel Partners; (4) Business Recruitment and Evaluation; (5) Sponsorships; (6) Tenant Improvements; and (7) Placemaking/Events. Neka Creative, a former member of ETBP that helped create its brochure, joined the initiative and was contracted to lead the Brand and Marketing work.

While using a slide presentation titled *Retail Reimagined A New Downtown Approach* dated October 2018, Ugboajah then gave an overview of the strategic approach her Brand Marketing work group undertook to uniquely repurpose these vacant retail spaces; create engaging experiences for people living, working and visiting downtown; expand growth opportunities for diverse businesses; and foster ongoing retail success that can be sustained.

Based on the many different audiences they needed to consider, it was determined they needed a multifaceted approach:

1. The master brand (Consortium) comprised of leaders and organizations with a vested interest in successful outcomes;
2. Exciting sub-brands (Retail), the first of which is the pop-up, with unique offerings and mainstream appeal, i.e., the sweet spot; and
3. Other projects such as long-term retail/business incubation, and curation to ensure equity in downtown retail spaces.

Obstacles to overcome include barriers to entry; parking concerns; historical lack of access for diverse businesses; an unwelcoming environment; and convincing property managers the value proposition is proof of concept.

For this to be successful, we must create a brand direction that excites a broad audience base, develop an equitable plan that promotes both short- and long-term growth, and remove barriers to entry. The sweet spot is having total diverse ownership, but able to produce mainstream products.

Ugboajah then unveiled the new brand for the Consortium, i.e., **Chameleon**, and for the sub-brands, e.g., **Shoppes, Co-Working, Café**. They are building the brand, mission and values around Chameleon so that when a seasonal pop-up is done and there's another initiative everyone still identifies with the values of Chameleon.

Lastly, Ugboajah described the many benefits of the Chameleon Consortium for businesses – from Empty to Equity, property owners – from Unoccupied to Unbelievable, and Minneapolis – from Vacant to Vital.

Collison explained they are 60 days (by first the year) away from having all of their marketing materials and a simple website done. He'll send information to everyone and continue to drive the narrative that we can do small and scalable businesses in currently vacant space in a meaningful way. The Small Business Team is active in this initiative and if anyone is interested in the equity, retail or sponsorship piece of it, let him know.

- C. Featured Business: Izzy's Ice Cream.** Collison explained the ETBP doesn't often highlight a single business, but there are a few in East Town that are standouts in their field and have a

successful and meaningful organization worth highlighting and we're grateful for Jeff and Lara for taking the risk to locate their incredible business here.

While using a slide presentation titled *East Town Minneapolis Business Partnership*, Jeff Sommers, Co-Founder and Co-owner of Izzy's Ice Cream, began by providing background on himself. He's a former public schoolteacher and it's an interesting place to be speaking because one of his former students is at The Loft Literary Center, has had former students both read and present poetry in this space, and Izzy's has their all staff meetings at The Loft.

Then he read his mission in which he admitted borrowing the phrase "making great moments for individuals and small groups" from Louis Kahn, a well known architect who built Jatiyo Sangsad Bhaban, the National Assembly Building of Bangladesh, and hopefully today we'll have a great small group experience.

Sommers first presented before this group in September 2013 and if you were there then some of this information may be familiar. Then he gave an overview of how he and his wife, both English majors who met at Hamlin University, built up their ice cream business.

When in graduate school in Michigan, they saw a Capt'n Frosty's ice cream shop in Pinckney, a small town outside of Ann Arbor which didn't have particularly great ice cream, but the community came out for it and they were inspired by that reception. When he and Lara returned to Minnesota, he taught for 6 more years and Lara practiced law, and if you think about English majors and business, they're always trying to figure out what is the secret language of business, plumbing, marketing, this or that City office, and how do we elevate the young people that come and join our organization and sustain that over time, so the English major piece has been really good to us. We've been hiring help with numbers.

Izzy's business is bigger than it appears; it has ice cream in two retail stores, is a significant supplier to the Minnesota Twins, i.e., more than 250,000 during a season, Pizza Luce is one of their largest customers as well as D'Amico and Sons, they're online, and they do a lot of interesting dynamic things, e.g., Shannon Leech, VP of Operations, has been spearheading 5 years of their 13 Days of Giving campaign in February (<https://izzysicecream.com/about/charitable-giving/>) leading up to Valentine's Day.

Sommers described the various ways in which they are completely immersed in the community on an ongoing basis and thus have a significant community impact.

Because he had to earn the opportunity to be the teacher of 7th and 8th graders each day, he then treated the audience as such and conveyed his remaining stories in a vignette style.

Displaying the slide titled *Mr. Clean Article*, Sommers advised this is the first slide a new hire sees during orientation. Sommers' role is to teach 100s of young people how to clean and sanitize, which is aided by the article. It is really important in small business to help the audience understand how deeply they have to dive into something to be successful, so they work really hard in the institution and want staff to leave their environment caring and thinking people need to do that practice at home. It is hard to teach people to wash their hands and the CDC and World Health Organization work on the technical aspects of it and had a contest that the WHO won. Izzy's works far into staff's imagination just to build that first skill.

Sommers continued by describing their move west to their East Town location which was built from the ground up by David Samela; the process of hiring young people which involves calling and speaking to their families or custodians towards teaching and building job responsibility; and the incredible East Town team of young people that delivers a real product in a safe way to an average of 2,000 people daily on a summer day.

Other activities in which is Izzy's involved to engage with different audiences includes hundreds of tours at its East Town store each year; preparing a flavor for the Minnesota State Fair; and a program with Camp Emerge.

Sommers advised if he takes us back to the early years of his company in Saint Paul, it is beautiful to know when they had a team of young people behind the store scooping, some came from family with means and some came from family with no or little means, but they were equal when they scooped ice cream than anywhere else in this country; it is a profound truth of working as a young person in a safe environment with a lot of accountability. They have seen young people who have left Izzy's and gone on to do super interesting things and it has had an equally positive impact on both groups of people and is something that can be repeated and scaled and brought into the community in many ways.

To accentuate that point, in closing, Sommers told his East Town story of the week involving the son of a former principal teaching young people in detention to write G-rated raps so that the next group of students has the opportunity he has today. He is teaching them about the future, vision, now is important to the next, it'll be good for Disney and it will be awesome. Sommers would argue Izzy's is attempting to do that, trying to write that rap and make good ice cream. It happens in lots of way, e.g., partnering soon with a chocolate shop out of Madison. Then he showed a short video of "It's Ice Cream Time" and announced their first 6 quart tub sale.

Lastly, after entertaining a few questions from the audience, samples of Izzy Pops and ice cream sandwiches were made available. For more information, visit <https://izzysicecream.com/about/our-story/>.

- **Closing Remarks**

Collison thanked the audience for attending, the speakers for their presentations, and reminded them of the November 15th business forum on diversity, equity and inclusion at the Finnovation Lab/Impact Hub MSP.