



Primary Themes from Café Conversations

December 12, 2011

In late October and November, three Community Café forums were held to obtain feedback from Brooklyn Park businesses. A broad range of businesses attended the meetings, ranging from one-person consultants to manufacturing firms that employ hundreds.

The Café Conversations produced 15 pages of notes that detailed specific challenges and opportunities for the community to address in order to achieve the goal of making Brooklyn Park the best place to do business. Throughout the discussions, several key themes emerged that warrant discussion by the Task Force and development of actionable recommendations:

1. Access To Resources for Business

- Businesses aren't aware of what the City does, what the rules are, what programs are available to assist them
- Businesses want more opportunities to network, support each other and explore potential joint promotions

2. Access to Workers and Training Providers

- Businesses need skilled workers but don't know where/how to find them and lack connections to training providers and other resources
- Perception that residents don't have the necessary skills

3. Enhance the Image/Improve Marketing of Brooklyn Park and its Businesses

- Businesses in BP are hindered because of the perception of the community (crime, lower income, confusion with Brooklyn Center, etc.)
- Businesses want help marketing ("welcome packet", business award program)
- Interest in campaign to encourage the community to "shop local"

4. Make it Easier to Do Business in Brooklyn Park

- Businesses want clearer rules that level the playing field between Brooklyn Park and other communities
- Businesses want fair and even enforcement of regulations
- Streamline permitting process and clearly communicate costs and timeline
- Businesses want to see, hear and feel that the City is on their side – more emphasis on supporting and retaining existing businesses

5. Continue to Attract New Businesses to Brooklyn Park

- More restaurants!
- Businesses recognize and desire more businesses but need to better understand City's vision and what it does to attract businesses
- External audiences not clear on what businesses/industries the City is interested in recruiting

6. Continue Business Forward to Ensure Voice of Business is Heard

- Sustain the work of the Task Force through establishment of a formal advisory committee that would keep business issues and the business climate in the forefront for the City and its partners

In addition to the themes above, participants in the Cafes commented that businesses don't fully understand the City's work and plans for improvements to land use and infrastructure and for dealing with and capitalizing on the increasing diversity of Brooklyn Park residents. Other groups within the City are addressing these issues and the Task Force will hear an update on those efforts.

7. Create Environment For Business Growth Through Land Use & Infrastructure

- Participants would like planning and zoning to balance land uses so as to provide space for industrial uses as well as office, retail and housing
- The 610 corridor and fixing the 169 triangle were critical and have helped business.
- Keep working on other projects that will position the community for business growth, including roads, better transit to get workers to jobs, and better fiber to support business.

8. Promote and Celebrate Diversity in Brooklyn Park

- Recognize the changing demographics in the community and develop strategies to dispel myths and encourage more cooperation and communication across ethnic groups