



Small Business Strategic Plan

June 2010

Neighborhood & Business Services

Economic Development Office

Introduction

The Small Business Strategic Plan is intended to serve as an action plan for the City of Charlotte to use in leading a collaborative effort to help grow and sustain small businesses. The goal is for our community to become the premier location for small business investment and growth. This plan recognizes the many organizations that provide services to small businesses in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and the need to better collaborate with these organizations to implement the objectives of this plan. One of the key findings from the Small Business Strategic Plan input process was that this collaborative effort needs to be improved and it needs a lead organization. The City of Charlotte, through its role as a neutral party/convener, is best positioned to provide the necessary leadership to improve collaborative efforts for the benefit of the community's small businesses and help implement the identified strategies necessary to sustain and expand Charlotte's economic base.

The creation of the Small Business Strategic Plan originated from an August 2009 request from the Charlotte City Council's Economic Development & Planning Committee. The Committee asked for the City's Business Advisory Committee (BAC) to identify opportunities to grow Charlotte's small businesses. In October 2009, the BAC reported back to the Economic Development & Planning Committee by outlining the need for the development of a strategic plan to assist small businesses. In January 2010, City Council approved this recommendation. A description of the Business Advisory Committee and a copy of their recommendation can be found in **Appendix A**.

The City's BAC has played a critical role in advancing this effort and providing important insight throughout the development of the strategy. The City's Small Business Resource Partners, organizations providing services to small businesses, were also heavily involved in the development of this strategy, participating in a series of meetings throughout the planning process. A complete list of these organizations and a description of their services can be found in **Appendix D**.

Additionally, input into the development of the Small Business Strategic Plan was received from small businesses through an online survey and a small business public forum.

The key elements in the Small Business Strategic Plan are:

1. Vision: To be the premier community for small business investment and growth
2. Mission: To Create an environment to help small business thrive in Charlotte-Mecklenburg through collaboration and public/private/non-profit partnerships
3. Objectives:
 - a. Build and strengthen a sustainable local consortium of business resource partners
 - b. Increase awareness of small business resources by developing a web portal with a recognizable brand and on-going marketing support
 - c. Provide information and resources that meet changing market needs
 - d. Promote public/private/non-profit partnerships to enable business owners to find capital
 - e. Increase opportunities for small businesses to expand local sales

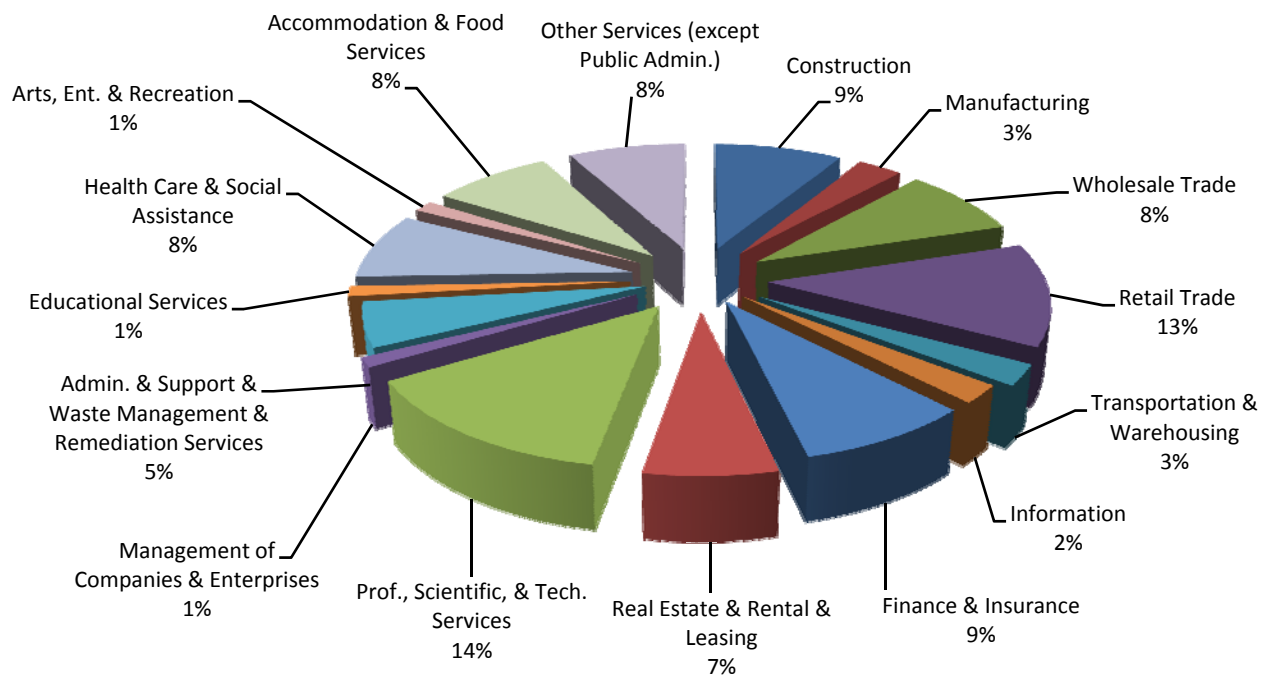
Background

Small Business Demographics:

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's County Business Patterns, there were 27,416 businesses with 99 or fewer employees in Charlotte-Mecklenburg in 2007. Seventy percent of these businesses had nine or fewer employees. This group also counted 69,554 sole proprietorships (businesses with only the proprietor receiving a salary) in Charlotte-Mecklenburg in 2007. The 27,000+ small businesses were primarily concentrated in the following sectors: Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services (14%); Retail Trade (13%); Finance & Insurance (9%); and, Construction (9%).

Chart 1: 2007 NAICS County Business Patterns

NAICS codes for the 27, 416 small businesses in Mecklenburg County



In comparison with Charlotte-Mecklenburg's peer cities, Charlotte-Mecklenburg has more small businesses (27,416) than: Indianapolis, Denver, Nashville and Raleigh. On a per capita basis, Charlotte-Mecklenburg has more small businesses (1 small business/1,000 population) than: Indianapolis, Nashville, Raleigh, and Tampa. A complete peer city comparison can be found in **Appendix B**.

Charlotte also has been widely cited as a good place for small businesses. Accolades that support this include:

- Ranked 17th on Forbes 200 Best Metro Areas for Business and Careers; *Forbes.com*, April 2010
- Ranked 56th on Forbes 100 Most Affordable Cities; *Forbes.com*, December 2009
- Ranked 2nd Best Place to Start a Small Business; *bizjournals.com*, February 2009
- Ranked 8th Best Place to Live and Launch; *Forbes Small Business*, October 2008

In summary, Charlotte has a vibrant and important small business economy and is recognized by business relocation specialists (and small business owners?) as a good location for small businesses.

Current State of Small Business in Charlotte:

To assess the current state of small business in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, City Economic Development staff reviewed information from the *BusinessFirst* Charlotte 2009 survey. This survey was conducted October-December 2009, and while not specifically targeted to small businesses, the City received responses from 76 businesses with 100 employees or fewer out of a total 166 respondents. The major findings of this survey included:

- Businesses surveyed predicted a 3.9 percent growth in employment over the next 12 months
- 15 percent of respondents expected to expand local operations in 2010
- 69 percent of sales occurred in the local or regional marketplace, lessening the likelihood of significant relocations from the Charlotte region

In January and February 2010, City staff conducted an online, 14-question survey specifically aimed at small businesses. The City received 227 responses to this survey included the following major findings:

- 62 percent were “satisfied”, or “very satisfied” that Charlotte is “*business friendly*”
- 44 percent were “satisfied, or “very satisfied” with the *availability of business assistance programs*
- 42 percent were “dissatisfied”, or “very dissatisfied” in their *ability to secure business capital/financing*
- 143 respondents provided ideas as to “*how state and local governments can assist their company in creating jobs,*” with the top four ideas being:
 - 1) Help with financing/provide access to capital
 - 2) Lower taxes and fees/provide incentives or stimulus funds
 - 3) Assistance in securing City/government contracts
 - 4) Streamline City/government permitting & processes
- 100 respondents provided ideas on “*what business assistance programs would be most helpful,*” with the top four ideas being:
 - 1) Financial assistance
 - 2) Government certification/education
 - 3) Counseling services
 - 4) Small business training/mentoring/assistance

On March 2, 2010, the City invited small businesses to a public forum to solicit input into the proposed small business strategy and to better understand their needs. Approximately 60 small business representatives attended the public forum where following major themes emerged:

- Small businesses are experiencing a shortage of working capital due to difficulty in collecting accounts receivable and difficulty in receiving financing/lines of credit

- There is a perceived difficulty/limited ability to do business with the City
- There is a need for greater coordination and marketing of all of the available small business resources in our community

Peer Cities and Best Practices:

City Economic Development staff reviewed peer cities’ small business programs and their websites to identify best practices and services. Peer cities included in this analysis include: Raleigh, Nashville, Tampa, Portland, Denver and Austin, plus two international cities for an added perspective. Staff also researched best practices in New York and Phoenix. A chart summarizing these findings can be found in **Appendix C**.

This analysis indicated that the City of Charlotte’s small business website lacks information frequently found on peer city websites, including: an event calendar, a “Frequently Asked Questions” page and the ability to contact a City representative directly through the website. The City of Charlotte also lacks many of the small business program offerings of these peer cities such as: assistance to start-up businesses, and assistance to mid-cycle businesses and free counseling. These services however are offered in our community by the Small Business Resource Providers (**Appendix D**). Denver and New York offer the widest variety of services, including: a one-stop business assistance location, workforce recruitment assistance, funding assistance, free counseling, training, mentoring, and networking.

One current “best practice” in the economic development field is “economic gardening.” Economic gardening works to grow a city’s economy by focusing on the retention and growth of the local entrepreneur community. A key component of economic gardening involves identifying competitive or business intelligence, through the use of high-powered databases, which provide information to small businesses to increase their competitiveness and market knowledge. Economic gardening also focuses on a city’s infrastructure and quality of life amenities to entice entrepreneurs to locate and create businesses. The last component of economic gardening is to build connections and promote networking opportunities between local businesses by facilitating industry clusters and cross marketing opportunities. Economic gardening is being embraced by many cities across the U.S., but most programs are being implemented in collaboration with community business resource providers, such as the local chamber of commerce, area colleges, and the library.

Small Business Resource Partners in Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Support for Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s 27,000+ small businesses is provided by a wide range of public and private/non-profit agencies and organizations dedicated to small business development. The City refers to this group of key organizations as the Small Business Resource Providers (**Appendix D**). These organizations provide a wide range of services that are key elements of a small business support system, including:

- Training programs and opportunities
- Access to capital
- Free business counseling

- Free access to business information
- Purchasing opportunities
- Small business advocacy
- Networking opportunities
- Marketing of programs and opportunities

Currently, many of these resource providers come together monthly as part of an informal “small business roundtable”. The purpose of the roundtable is to share information, not to provide direction or leadership to the small business support effort. Over the past year, the Charlotte Chamber has also brought together representatives from these organizations to develop and present programs focused on assisting small businesses as part of their “*Survive and Thrive*” program.

The organizations identified as Small Business Resource Partners are:

- Business Expansion and Funding Corporation (BEFCOR)
- Carolinas Minority Supplier Development Council (CMSDC)
- Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) Institute for Entrepreneurship
- Charlotte Chamber of Commerce
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
- Charlotte Regional Economic and Workforce Recovery Initiative
- City of Charlotte – Economic Development Office
- City of Charlotte – Small Business Opportunity (SBO) Program
- Counselors to America’s Small Businesses (SCORE)
- Mecklenburg County
- Self Help
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC)
- The Employers Association

Additionally, there are a number of member organizations targeted at small and entrepreneurial businesses that provide support to their members. These include, but are not limited to:

- Arrowood Association
- Business Innovation & Growth (BIG) Council
- Carolinas Asian-American Chamber of Commerce
- Carolinas Association of General Contractors (AGC)
- Latin American Chamber of Commerce
- National Association of Woman Business Owners (NAWBO)

City of Charlotte: Small Business Opportunity Program

The City of Charlotte’s Small Business Opportunity (SBO) Program was created in 2004 and is targeted at a subset of the 27,000+ small businesses in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The SBO Program is the outcome of

a legal challenge to the City's former Minority and Woman Business Development Program and focuses on awarding Small Business Enterprise (SBE) certification to small businesses that meet established size criteria and have the potential to do business with the City of Charlotte. For example, a landscaping company could be certified as a SBE; but a personal grooming establishment could not, as the City does not directly purchase personal grooming services. Currently there are 800 certified Small Business Enterprises. They operate in Mecklenburg and seven surrounding counties.

The SBO Program's focus includes identifying contracting opportunities for these businesses, working with the City's Key Business Units to set SBE utilization goals, and tracking and reporting compliance to these goals. The SBO Program also offers City of Charlotte certified SBEs the "Advance Your Business" Development Program consisting of:

- Small Business Workshop Series: Free monthly workshops and seminars provide networking opportunities for small businesses
- Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) Institute for Entrepreneurship (IE) Partnership: The City provides certified SBEs tuition assistance of up to \$300 each fiscal year; SBEs can select from a range of CPCC's entrepreneurship course offerings
- CPCC's *Getting to the CORE of Business* Strategic Development Program: This pilot initiative kicked-off in spring 2010. This five-month program provides business owners individualized, practical training to integrate, implement and execute a focused growth strategy
- Professional Association Sponsorships: One-time partial sponsorship of \$100 toward annual membership dues for the following organizations: Charlotte Chamber, Latin American Chamber of Commerce, Association of General Contractors (AGC), Metrolina Minority Contractors Associations (MMCA), and National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO)
- Mentor Protégé Program: Hands-on managerial and technical assistance by matching SBE owners and managers in need of guidance and training with larger more experienced companies
- Survive & Thrive: Partnership with the Charlotte Chamber and other area small business providers offering business owners an educational monthly breakfast series
- ACCESS: Partnership with local government agencies and small business resource providers to coordinate and hold a yearly half-day procurement conference

Another focus of the City's SBO Program is the SBE Loan Fund, an innovative public/private fund established in 2003 to assist small businesses with gaining access to capital. The fund provides more flexible underwriting guidelines than traditional lenders. Businesses eligible for financing through the SBE Loan Fund typically would not be able to secure financing from a traditional bank. The SBE Loan Fund is administered by Self Help, a North Carolina non-profit community development lender.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

City Economic Development staff, the Small Business Resource Partners and the BAC all participated in analyzing the current Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the current small business climate in Charlotte. This analysis is summarized in the chart below.

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of small business resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Variety — Limited redundancy • Depth and capacity of existing services • No cost start-up resources • Talented workforce • Small business friendly 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to capital for the small businesses • Lack of overall strategy • Lack of centralized marketing efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Online portal and web based resources — Communications with small businesses
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — A central portal for information and data collection for providers • Create and implement a strategic plan • Enhanced resources to support start-up, mid-cycle, maturing and failing small businesses • Link Charlotte-Mecklenburg to regional resources • “Business to Business” small business network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Opportunity to partner to go after project -- Opportunity to purchase from one another 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding to implement initiatives that come out of this process • Access to working capital for the small businesses • Changing mindset to new economy- way to do business with internet, alliances, etc., • Perception of unfavorable cost of doing business • Perceptions of business environment stifling attraction and growth

A key strength for small businesses in Charlotte is the variety and quality of the available small business resources and the perception that Charlotte is “business friendly.” However, a clear weakness is that many of these small business resources are unknown by Charlotte’s small businesses because these services are not well marketed. There is a clear opportunity to create a central web portal that would provide access to small business services and a shared brand for all small business resource partners to market their services. The threat to accomplishing this is the lack of funding, particularly given current economic conditions. Another threat to growing small business in Charlotte is the perception that Charlotte has an unfavorable cost of doing business and government regulations that stifle the growth of small businesses.

Recommendations

To accomplish the recommended vision, mission and objectives of the Small Business Strategic Plan, the City of Charlotte must assume a leadership role with the small business resource partners and provide the resources necessary to accomplish the objectives of this plan. The intent is for the City to better connect small businesses to available resources in the community, not for the City to provide these resources to all 27,000 small businesses.

The City is uniquely situated to lead this effort because:

- The City's interests span across the specialties (i.e. training, lending, and counseling) of the resource partners. No other resource partner has as broad a perspective as the City
- The City convened the resource partners and lead the effort to develop this plan
- The City has a successful track record of building and maintaining collaborative partnerships with both for-profit and not-for-profit groups
- The City is the only organization that currently has resources that can be reallocated to meet the objectives of this plan

The objectives of the Small Business Strategic Plan are listed below. A key consideration was how the recommendations of the Small Business Strategic Plan would strengthen the City existing Small Business Opportunity Program: This Strategic Plan positively enhances the City's certified Small Business Enterprises by:

- 1) Making information more available
- 2) Providing easier access to local government contracting information
- 3) Enhancing opportunities for business-to-business networking
- 4) Expanding opportunities for "success stories" recognition

Each objective has several accompanying action steps which are detailed in **Appendix E**. Each action step is assigned a, lead party, supporting party and timeline. The City is not the lead organization for each action step. For example, CPCC's Institute for Entrepreneurship is given the lead to maximize the effectiveness of the existing "Resource Navigator" by identifying best practices in other communities using the "Resource Navigator". The objectives and key action steps are:

Objective #1: Build and strengthen a sustainable local consortium of small business resource partners

The Small Business Resource Partners play an essential role in growing small businesses in Charlotte. However, not only do they each operate independently of one another, small businesses are often times unaware that these resources exist. A collaborative effort amongst the Partners to act together to, among other things, support the development of a central "go-to" web portal will greatly enhance the current small business environment. The goal of the web portal is to simplify access to information and resources for the small business community and is crucial to demonstrating our commitment to supporting small business development. Key action steps to accomplish this include:

- Determine and agree upon a set of guiding principles regarding commitment to move forward in developing the consortium and the centralized web portal
- Identify the funding/resource requirements for a web-based Charlotte-Mecklenburg small business portal and sustained marketing program
- Add a small business focus to the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) charge

Objective #2: Increase awareness of small business resources by developing a web portal with a recognizable brand and on-going marketing support

Currently, each resource partner brands and markets itself separately. Most of the resource partners are non-profits or funded by the State and therefore have limited marketing budgets. There is no single, comprehensive method to learn about all of the available small business resources in Charlotte. A consortium brand and marketing strategy, together with a central web portal, would serve as a public face representing our commitment to small business development. This brand and central web portal would serve the vital role of being the clear “go to” source for small businesses to learn where to go to find answers and solutions to specific business concerns. Key action steps to accomplish this include:

- Perform an inventory of the resource partners and their services
- Develop in collaboration with the resource partners, a small business web portal and a brand for the web portal
- Develop a coordinated approach to programming and marketing for Small Business Week

Objective #3: Provide information and resources that meet changing market needs

Small businesses are dynamic. Today their primary need is access to capital. A few years ago their primary need was a skilled workforce. Access to up-to-date, useful and relevant information and resources are critical to their success. Systems must be put in place to capture these ever changing needs and to keep the information on the web portal up-to-date and relevant. This is crucial to the success of the brand and web portal, and will also serve to help the Resource Providers respond to current small business needs. Key action steps to accomplish this include:

- Complete and maintain an up-to-date comprehensive inventory of local government permitting requirements and provide this information via the web portal
- Develop a consolidated small business event calendar on the web portal and a proactive process to keep it updated
- Develop “How to Start a Business” wizard for the web portal
- Maximize effectiveness of Resource Navigator, an existing on-line tool to connect businesses with area resources
- Evaluate starting an “economic gardening” program to provide market assessment, research and analysis to targeted small businesses to help them grow

Objective #4: Promote public/private/non-profit partnerships to enable business owners to find capital

Access to capital is the number one need of small businesses in today's market. Three resource partners, Self Help, BEFCOR, and the City, provide capital to small businesses. Other resource partners, CPCC, SCORE and SBTDC, assist businesses in preparing applications for loans and capital. However, the overwhelming amount of small business lending is done by the private sector. Therefore, the plan calls for additional public/private partnerships to help businesses access this private capital. Key actions steps to accomplish this include:

- Hold an Access to Capital conference
- Provide education to make potential borrowers credit ready
- Hold lender roundtables to facilitate ongoing dialogue, create a lender referral network, and develop partnerships
- Seek opportunities for non-traditional lenders (CDFIs, angels, Grameen, etc.) to engage in the Charlotte market

Objective #5: Increase opportunities for small businesses to expand sales locally

There is an opportunity to grow local small businesses by connecting them to other businesses in Charlotte's target growth clusters. This will provide businesses the ability to grow their sales, hire more people and keep money in Charlotte's economy. A key part of this work is providing better information via the web portal to connect small business both to local government and local business procurement opportunities. Key actions steps to accomplish this include:

- Provide centralized information on local government contracting opportunities
- Explore and research options for a "buy-local" campaign
- Examine State enabling legislation to consider allowing local companies opportunities to match low bids in Charlotte area
- Explore an online "Business to Business" marketplace
- Identify the supply chain for major industry clusters to discover and identify local suppliers

Funding and Resources

Economic Development staff estimates the development of the web portal, along with the associated branding and initial marketing campaign will cost \$150,000. These resources are available in the Community Economic Development Strategy account, which as of May 2010, has a balance of \$15,000,000. The annual marketing and maintenance costs for the web portal are estimated to be \$20,000 to \$30,000 and can be covered by reallocating existing resources within the Economic Development budget. This will also require a full-time staff person to lead development of the web portal, branding effort and marketing campaign. This can be met by reallocating and realigning existing Economic Development staff.

The Small Business Resource Partners will contribute in-kind resources to the marketing and branding campaign by co-branding their materials, events and websites, where possible.

Metrics

The complete list of objectives and action steps in **Appendix E** identifies a timetable for each action step. The success of the Small Business Strategic Plan will be evaluated based on the following metrics:

- An annual web-survey of small businesses to measure the percentage increase of small businesses' satisfaction with the Charlotte business climate, and the percentage increase of small businesses' satisfaction with the small businesses resources and services
- Web analytics to measure the success of the web portal
- Increased utilization of the Small Business Resource Partners
- Specific measures on small business vitality (i.e.: number of people employed by small business; decline in number of small business failures)

Appendix A

Business Advisory Committee

Committee Charge:

The Business Advisory Committee is charged to: provide recommendations and advice to City Council on ways the City can help business in Charlotte; provide a forum for businesses to raise issues; discuss and have input into City policy responses to these issues; provide input and advice to business retention planning efforts and implementation of the Business Retention Plan; keep City Council and Key Business Executives abreast of changes in business and business climate, and how that might affect business-government relations and needs of public services.

Committee Membership:

- Two (2) members by the Mayor;
- Six (6) members by the Charlotte City Council;
- Five (5) members by the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce
- One (1) member appointed by the Manufacturer’s Council
- One (1) member appointed by the Arrowood Association

Committee Members:

Scott Stone, Mayor Appointment, Chair	Tunis Hunt, Arrowood Association
Terri DeBoo, Charlotte Chamber	Eric Dudley, Charlotte Chamber
Michael Orzech, Charlotte Chamber	Todd Paris, Charlotte Chamber
Robert Barkman, City Council	Tariq Bokhari, City Council
Lee Froneberger, City Council	Nalan Karakaya-Mulder, City Council
Linda Daniel, Manufacturer’s Council	Gary LaBrosse, City Council



MEMORANDUM

TO: Economic Development & Planning Committee

FROM: Scott Stone, Business Advisory Committee Chairman

DATE: October 16, 2009

RE: Recommendation to ED&P regarding small business resources

At the request of the Economic Development & Planning Committee, the City's Business Advisory Committee has performed a SWOT Analysis (attached) on the current resources available to the small business community. From this analysis, it is our recommendation that the City needs a clearer strategy to support the local small business community. We believe that this strategy would best be communicated and implemented through a small business strategic plan which the City should undertake with its partners, including: Charlotte Chamber, SBTDC, CPCC, Mecklenburg County, etc.

Elements of this Small Business Strategic Plan should include:

- Mission Statement
- Quantifiable Objectives and Goals of the Plan
- Definition of a Small Business for Purposes of the Plan
- Defined Roles of the City, Chamber and other small business resource partners (Chamber, CPCC, UNCC, SBTDC, SCORE, Self-Help, BEFCOR, SBA)
- Peer City Analysis
- Small Business Data – research on current state of small businesses in Charlotte
- Identification of resources needed to implement plan and possible sources

This strategic plan would be incorporated into the City's updated Economic Development Strategic Plan for FY10 – FY15. The Business Advisory Committee would continue to provide direction and feedback to the City's Economic Development Office during the strategic plan process.

We recommend the creation of a Small Business Strategic Plan and the Business Advisory Committee would like to be a key driver in the development and implementation of this plan.

Cc: Business Advisory Committee

Tom Flynn, Economic Development Director

Nancy Rosado, Small Business Development Program Manager

Appendix B

Number of employees	County Business Patterns						
	Atlanta	Charlotte	Indianapolis	Denver	Tampa	Nashville	Raleigh
	Fulton	Mecklenburg	Marion	Denver	Hillsborough	Davidson	Wake
1 – 4	18,795	14,500	11,505	12,048	19,225	8,726	13,319
5 - 9	5,406	4,985	4,766	3,824	5,638	3,722	4,389
10 - 19	3,943	3,765	3,677	2,726	3,776	2,860	3,303
20 - 49	3,241	3,051	2,727	2,057	2,723	2,073	2,492
50 - 99	1,297	1,115	1,028	783	1,047	795	886
Small Businesses	32,682	27,416	23,703	21,438	32,409	18,176	24,389

* The U.S. Census County Business Patterns provides data on the total number of establishments by employment-size classes for all U.S. counties.

Nonemployer Firms	Self-Employed with No Paid Employees						
	Atlanta	Charlotte	Indianapolis	Denver	Tampa	Nashville	Raleigh
	Fulton	Mecklenburg	Marion	Denver	Hillsborough	Davidson	Wake
	81,673	69,554	51,567	48,978	90,344	51,936	64,222

*Self-employed with no paid employees (nonemployer statistics) with annual business receipts of \$1,000 or more.

All Small Businesses	All Small Businesses						
	Atlanta	Charlotte	Indianapolis	Denver	Tampa	Nashville	Raleigh
	Fulton	Mecklenburg	Marion	Denver	Hillsborough	Davidson	Wake
	114,355	96,970	75,270	70,416	122,753	70,112	88,611

* Combined total of county business patterns and self-employed with no paid employees firms.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau <http://censtats.census.gov/cbpnaic/cbpnaic.shtml> and <http://www.census.gov/econ/nonemployer/index.html>

Appendix C

Web Portal Matrix: Peer Cities & Best Practices for Small Businesses

The web portal matrix provides a brief snapshot of City government website information for entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Small Business Offerings	*Charlotte	*Raleigh	*Nashville	*Tampa	New York	Portland	Denver	Phoenix	Austin
Cities Website Comparisons									
Event Calendar			X	X	X	X	X		X
Frequently Asked Questions		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Resource Partner Listings	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Steps in Starting a Business	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gov't Certifications / Contracting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Financial Information	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Umbrella Brand						X			
Green Initiatives						X	X		
Small Business Information Portal				X	X	X			X
Ease of Navigation					X	X	X	X	
Contact Us		X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Cities Small Business Services/Offerings									
One-Stop Location				X	X		X	X	X
Workforce Recruitment					X		X		
Assist Start-up Businesses			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assist Mid-cycle Businesses			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Funding Opportunities	X			X	X		X	X	X
Free Counseling Services				X	X		X	X	X
Training	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mentoring					X				
Networking	X		X	X	X	X	X		X

*SBE or MWBE Program Only

Appendix D

Charlotte Small Business Resource Partners

City of Charlotte – Economic Development Office

The City of Charlotte's Economic Development Office focuses on locating and relocating businesses to Charlotte, workforce development, business corridor revitalization, financial assistance programs, small business opportunities, and business retention.

Old City Hall

600 East Trade Street, 3rd Floor

Charlotte, NC 28202

Phone: 704-432-1395

Website: www.charmeck.org

City of Charlotte – Small Business Opportunity (SBO) Program

The SBO Program seeks to enhance competition in City contracting and to promote small business economic growth and development in the Charlotte Regional area. The City certifies small businesses as Small Business Enterprises (SBE) based upon established size standards. Small businesses can also participate in *Advance Your Business* development programs.

Old City Hall

600 East Trade Street, 3rd Floor

Charlotte, NC 28202

Phone: 704-432-1395

Website: <http://smallbiz.charmerck.org>

Self Help

A nonprofit community development lender whose mission is creating ownership and economic opportunity for small businesses and nonprofit organizations headed by minorities, women, rural residents and low-wealth families. Self- Help also administers the SBE Loan Fund.

926 Elizabeth Avenue

Charlotte, NC 28204-2204

Phone: 704-332-1514

Website: www.self-help.org

Business Expansion Funding Corporation (BEFCOR)

Working in partnership with a bank, BEFCOR provides federal 504 loan program financing for fixed assets at a low-fixed interest rate.

5970 Fairview Road, Suite 218

Charlotte, NC 28210

Phone: 704-442-8145

Website: www.charlottecdc.com

CPCC Institute for Entrepreneurship

Provides education, skills training, one-on-one counseling and access to their resource center with materials and resource information to plan or improve small businesses. Free seminars on business related topics are offered most months at the Institute and various public library locations.

*CPCC Central Campus, Hall Professional Development Building
1112 Charlottetowne Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28204
Phone: (704) 330-6736
Website: www.cpcc.edu/e-institute*

Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC)

Provides management counseling and educational services to small and midsized businesses. Their primary focus is operations, and business planning, and feasibility assessment.

*The Ben Craig Center
8701 Mallard Creek Road
Charlotte, NC 28262
Phone: (704) 548-1090
Website: www.sbtdc.org*

Counselors to America's Small Businesses (SCORE)

SCORE members are retired business professionals who provide volunteer business services to those interested in starting or expanding a business. Free consultations are available to help individuals define a successful marketing strategy, develop a marketing plan or help solve business problems.

*6302 Fairview Road, Suite 300
Charlotte, NC 28210-2227
Phone: 704-344-6576
Website: www.score.org*

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

Sample businesses, sample business research tools and much more are all available on the second floor of the Main Library.

*310 North Tryon Street
Charlotte, NC 28202
Phone: Please contact Charlotte SCORE at 704-344-6576 for appointments
Website: www.plcmc.org*

Charlotte Chamber of Commerce

A membership, volunteer-led organization that works to recruit companies interested in relocation; provides information and assistance; and monitors government to identify issues that affect the local business climate and advocates on behalf of its members.

*330 South Tryon Street
Charlotte, NC 28202
Phone: 704-378-1300
Website: www.charlottechamber.com*

Carolinas Minority Supplier Development Council (CMSDC)

A private, non-profit, membership organization of major corporations, financial institutions, government agencies, and universities that operate within North or South Carolina. The organization promotes and facilitates the development of business relationships between its members and certified minority-owned business enterprises

*100 Seaboard Street, Suite B-14
Charlotte, NC 28206
Phone: 704-549-1000
Website: www.carolinasmsdc.org*

Mecklenburg County (Minority, Women and Small Business Enterprises Program)

The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County offer a variety of economic development and business development programs for qualified businesses.

*Valerie C. Woodward Center
3025 Freedom Drive, Suite 101
Charlotte, NC 28208
Phone: 704-336-6186
Website: www.charmeck.org/Departments/MWSBE/home.htm*

The Employers Association

Provides human resources and training services to organizations in the greater Charlotte, NC area. Serves more than 850 member organizations of all sizes and industries, both public and private.

*3020 West Arrowood Road
Charlotte, NC 28273
Phone: 704-522-8011
Website: www.employersassoc.com*

Small Business Administration (SBA)

An independent agency of the federal government that aids, counsels, assists and protects the interests of small business concerns. Also, provides SBA-backed loans, government contracting opportunities, disaster assistance and training programs to help small businesses succeed.

SBA Regional Office

6302 Fairview Road, Suite 300

Charlotte, NC 28210

Phone: 704-344-6563

Website: www.sba.gov

Charlotte Regional Economic and Workforce Recovery Initiative

A collaborative effort to address high unemployment due to the recession, particularly among professionals.

550 S. Caldwell Street, Suite 760

Charlotte, NC 28202

Phone: 704-336-6270

Website: www.pronetcharlotte.com

APPENDIX E

Objectives and Action Steps

Vision:

To be the premier community for small business investment and growth

Mission:

To create an environment to help small businesses thrive in Charlotte-Mecklenburg through collaboration and public/private/non-profit partnerships

Objectives:

1. Build and strengthen a sustainable local consortium of business resource partners
2. Increase awareness of small business resources by developing a web portal with a recognizable brand and on-going marketing support
3. Provide information and resources that meet changing market needs
4. Promote public/private/non-profit partnerships to enable business owners to find capital
5. Increase opportunities for small businesses to expand sales locally

Activities:

1. Build and strengthen a sustainable local consortium of business resource partners

- Define the value proposition of the consortium and each consortium member
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: CPCC, Charlotte Chamber
Timeline: Immediate
- Determine and agree upon a set of guiding principles regarding commitment to move forward
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: Immediate
- Identify the funding/resource requirements for a web-based Charlotte-Mecklenburg small business portal and sustained marketing program
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: NA
Timeline: Immediate

- Create a short-term and long-term funding strategy
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: October 2010
- Add a small business focus to the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) charge
Lead party: City Council
Supporting party: BAC
Timeline: September 2010
- Examine potential of a “Mayor’s Small Business Alliance” similar to Mayor’s Mentoring Alliance
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: October 2010

2. Increase awareness of small business resources by developing a web portal with a recognizable brand and on-going marketing strategy

- Perform an inventory of the resource providers and their services
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: October 2010
- Develop a small business web portal and a brand for the web portal
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: Fall 2010
- Create a short-term and long-term marketing strategy
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: Fall 2010 and ongoing
- Take a coordinated approach to Small Business Week
Lead party: CPCC
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: Ongoing

3. Provide information and resources that meet changing market needs

- Aggregate information from all resource partners to present most up to date picture of small business offerings, e.g. programming, loan programs, counseling, etc.

Lead party: City of Charlotte

Supporting party: CPCC

Timeline: April 2011

- Complete a comprehensive inventory of local government permitting requirements and provide this information via the web portal

Lead party: City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County

Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners

Timeline: April 2011

- Determine the schedule and process to refresh and update web portal information

Lead party: City of Charlotte

Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners

Timeline: January 2011 and ongoing

- Provide access to information, e.g., postcard with website address, packet, etc. to new small business identified through new business licenses

Lead party: City of Charlotte

Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners

Timeline: January 2011

- Regularly survey small businesses to ensure relevant programming and outreach

Lead party: City of Charlotte

Supporting party: SBTDC, CPCC

Timeline: Ongoing (at a minimum, one annual survey)

- Maximize effectiveness of Resource Navigator

Lead party: CPCC

Supporting party: City of Charlotte

Timeline: January 2011

- Provide a small business advocate to work with small business on regulatory permitting and other issues

Lead party: City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County

Supporting party: NA

Timeline: January 2011

- Develop a consolidated small business event calendar and a proactive process to keep it updated

Lead party: City of Charlotte

Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners

Timeline: January 2011

- Evaluate starting an “economic gardening” program to provide market assessment, research and analysis to targeted small businesses to help them grow

Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Charlotte Chamber
Timeline: April 2011

- Maintain and/or expand “Biz-Boost” program at SBTDC
Lead party: State of NC
Supporting party: SBTDC, City of Charlotte
Timeline: July 2010

- Develop “How to Start a Business” wizard for the City of Charlotte website
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Mecklenburg County
Timeline: April 2011

4. Promote public/private/non-profit partnerships to enable business owners to find capital

- Hold an Access for Capital conference
Lead party: Charlotte Chamber
Supporting party: City of Charlotte
Timeline: June 2010

- Provide education to make potential borrowers credit ready
Lead party: CPCC, SBTDC
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: Ongoing
 - Hold lender roundtables to facilitate ongoing dialogue, create lender referral network, develop partnerships, etc. Identify small business champions within each financial institution
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: State of NC
Timeline: December 2010

- Seek opportunities for non-traditional lenders (CDFIs, angels, etc.) to engage in the Charlotte market
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Charlotte Chamber
Timeline: Ongoing

- Regularly review city loan programs to ensure they are meeting market needs
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Self-Help, BEFCOR
Timeline: Ongoing

- Provide business resource directory to lenders
Lead party: City of Charlotte
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: April 2011 (updated annually)

5. Increase opportunities for small businesses to expand sales locally

- Explore and research options for buy local campaign
Lead party: Charlotte Chamber and City of Charlotte
Supporting party: NA
Timeline: June 2011
- Pursue state enabling legislation to allow local companies to match low bids in Charlotte area
Lead party: City of Charlotte, City Council, Mecklenburg County
Supporting party: Charlotte Chamber
Timeline: May 2010
- Provide information of local government contracting opportunities
Lead party: City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: Ongoing
- Structure and hold procurement conferences
Lead party: SBTDC, Charlotte Chamber
Supporting party: Small Business Resource Partners
Timeline: Ongoing
- Explore an online “Business to Business” marketplace
Lead party: City of Charlotte, Charlotte Chamber
Supporting party: NA
Timeline: 3-5 years
- Create a corporate procurement roundtable
Lead party: Charlotte Chamber
Supporting party: City of Charlotte
Timeline: October 2010
- Identify the supply chain for major clusters to discover and identify local suppliers
Lead party: Charlotte Regional Partnership/ Charlotte Chamber
Supporting party: NA
Timeline: Summer 2010
- Leverage relocation and business expansion projects that move to Charlotte to provide opportunities to the existing small businesses in Charlotte

Lead party: Charlotte Chamber
Supporting party: NA
Timeline: October 2010