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HARLEM CDC HOSTS “DOING BUSINESS UPTOWN” SMALL BUSINESS CONFERENCE

Citibank Sponsored Event United Seven Upper Manhattan Small Business Support Groups

The Harlem Community Development Corporation (Harlem CDC), in partnership with leading small business development organizations, hosted a small business conference at the Gospel Uptown Supper Club on Saturday, April 10th.

Sponsored by Citibank, “Doing Business Uptown” focused on the best practices for small businesses to manage and protect their firms in a changing market. The conference connected entrepreneurs interested in starting a business or expanding an existing enterprise with information on how to manage their businesses financial needs, as well as protection and insurance strategies. Guest speakers included Representative Charles B. Rangel, Harlem CDC President Curtis Archer and Citibank Vice President for Community Relations Rei Perez.

Participating small business development providers included ACCIÓN USA, Harlem Business Alliance, Entrepreneurial Assistance Program, Project Enterprise, East Harlem Business Capital Corporation and Washington Heights/Inwood Development Corporation.

“Helping New York’s small businesses grow and thrive are among my top priorities,” said Governor David A. Paterson. “Last summer I created the small business task force to make doing business in the state easier. Embracing their recommendations, in the 2010-2011 Executive Budget, I proposed a Small Business Revolving Loan Fund which would provide capital to entrepreneurs who are having difficulty accessing regular credit markets. Events like Saturday’s conference, combined with our already strong small business outreach, will ensure that we continue to support and grow our local businesses, like those here in Harlem.”

Rangel, a member of the Harlem CDC board, encouraged the participants not to lose hope, or faith, in themselves or the economy. “This is the first step of a very long process, because it's going to take a little bit of time before we fully recover. We have had a lot to overcome,” Rangel told the 250 participants. “But the tide is turning upward and I am confident that you are going to be a part of that success,” said Rangel. “You have people at all levels of government -- city, state and federal - pulling for you because they know that in the course of any sustained recovery, we have to bring along all businesses, not just the corporate ones. They want you to succeed not just because of the love and affection of American entrepreneurship, but also because we our economic future depends on getting all Americans back to work. And they can't get off the unemployment line unless you are successful in achieving your dreams,” Rangel said.

“Harlem’s importance as a cultural destination is an indisputable driver of business opportunity,” said Harlem CDC President Curtis L. Archer. “Landmark institutions like The Apollo Theater and Sylvia’s Restaurant reflect our economic vibrancy. But our challenge is to extend that legacy to a thriving performance, dining, shopping, tourism and business service sector. Replicating the success of up-and-comers—like Settepani, Harlem Vintage, Native, N Harlem Boutique, Gran Piatto D’Oro and Mojo—is what this conference was all about,” Archer added.

“Since 1996, Harlem CDC has created opportunities for both existing local businesses and the next generation of Upper Manhattan businesses by supporting residential development that has brought new life to long abandoned buildings and vacant lots,” said Harlem CDC Director of Residential Development Wayne Benjamin. “New and renovated buildings can create attractive street-level commercial spaces for small firms to grow and house new residents whose demand for goods and services will augment that of existing residents. While some did not understand the critical role residential development played in the community’s economic vitality, business activity ‘uptown’ has greatly benefited from residential development.”

In July of 2009, in an effort to develop new strategies to promote the growth and development of small businesses in New York, Governor Paterson created the Small Business Task Force. Taking the first steps towards making doing business in the State easier, the Task Force created two free online manuals aimed at connecting small business owners and entrepreneurs to important resources. The New York State Directory of Small Business Programs is an interactive online directory of State business resources and the New York State Small Business Lending Guide is a free online manual geared towards connecting small business owners and entrepreneurs with alternative banks and credit unions that are currently lending. Both manuals can be found by visiting: <http://www.esd.ny.gov/SmallBusiness>.

(Still photos from the conference are available upon request. Video of Rep. Rangel’s remarks is also available.)

Harlem Community Development Corporation, a subsidiary of Empire State Development Corporation, serves the greater Harlem community through planning and implementing a range of community development and revitalization initiatives for restoring Upper Manhattan as an economically stable and culturally vibrant community. For more information on Harlem CDC please visit <http://www.harlemcdc.org>.

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