



Summary of Barracks Row Neighborhood Market Analysis And Business Development Services

Introduction

In fall 2007, Barracks Row Main Street (BRMS) Board members observed potential weaknesses in their neighborhood's economic strength and market position, thus threatening the previous decade of economic progress. Concerns included: loss of retail strength through mixture of goods/services; the loss of anchor businesses beloved by the community; property owners and merchants seeking economic insight; and confusion regarding the area's customer base and position in the marketplace. The Board determined that professional assistance would be necessary to undertake a thorough market analysis and to recommend business development services that would analyze and promote the business district. BRMS selected Wander Group to partner with Retail Market Answers ("RMA"). Together, these organizations seek cooperative development ideas with the intended result being a strategic road map that guides the organization through business recruitment and retention. Products include an overall business recruitment plan for the commercial district business mix, including a Strategic Merchandising Plan; this will be developed by consultants working directly with stakeholders to understand the area's growth and quality of life preferences.

Specific areas of the undertaking include:

- 1. Neighborhood Market Analysis-** to answer questions about who is competition for Barracks Row when pursuing consumer dollars. The Analysis addresses two levels of trade areas- geographic and socioeconomic- and should assist in developing future revitalization programming. Possible focus for these strategies might include: developing the appropriate business mix; marketing and branding; encouraging entrepreneurship; and improving the organizational structure of Barracks Row Main Street.
- 2. Understanding Market Data-** in order to identify existing market conditions and to evaluate business opportunities. Quality, accurate information can help entrepreneurs and small business owners prepare better business plans thereby reducing the risk of their ventures as well as improving current operations for existing businesses. Amongst many uses, this information can: help existing businesses survive; be shared with property owners in order to recruit appropriate businesses; establish credibility for partnerships; and to develop materials that serve in business recruitment.
- 3. Analysis of the Entrepreneur/Small Business Environment-** as DC's stable neighborhoods have increased, entrepreneurs have found many areas to expand or create their start-up enterprise in communities that were formerly unacceptable. This dilutes the concentration of entrepreneurs in well-established stable commercial areas and removes some competitive advantage. Our work identifies motivating factors (or impediments) that answer why entrepreneurs choose to: a) locate in one area; b) relocate from one area to another; or c) close their business. As we have witnessed considerable turnover of small businesses in the last few years, it is essential to determine the entrepreneurs' decision making process and what can be done in response to build an inviting small business environment.
- 4. Retail Recruitment and Retention Analysis-** Main Street programs constantly face the struggle of managing a commercial corridor program with numerous economic development issues, including: developing relationships with property owners and small business owners; assisting existing businesses with operations and marketing; and recruiting new businesses that improve upon the current business mix. Program representatives should have a strategy in place with instructions on proceeding in order to make the best use of volunteers' and staff time.

Program Goals and Action Plan

This strategic road map will guide the organization through business recruitment and retention. BRMS will both improve their understanding of the current marketplace and create a sustainable business environment that benefits residents, businesses and property owners.