

AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Yesterday, the African American Chamber of Commerce served as Host for Councilman Sala Udin's special meeting with members of the African American Chamber, government officials, and representatives of Urban Retail Properties Company/Chicago, Illinois. The purpose of the meeting was to present the concept and begin discussing the plan for retail shops around the lower Fifth Avenue/Liberty Avenue corridor. Current plans include the establishment of over 35 retail stores and a possible defined zone for Kiosk Vendors. According to Mulugetta Birru, Director of the city's Urban Redevelopment Authority, the acquisition and development process of the corridor to take place over the next 2-2 ½ years.

Over 1.5 million people each year are projected to visit and shop in the redeveloped downtown shopping center. Of importance to all in attendance was and how African American Businesses can participate. Councilman Sala Udin stressed the fact the meeting was designed to begin a dialogue with the developers. "I solicit and welcome ideas and concepts for partnership and inclusion. Today's discussion is to begin exploring how to make it happen", the Councilman stated. Director Mulugetta Birru will play a key role as head of the city Urban Redevelopment Authority. Current downtown Black Business Owners present at the meeting raised questions on how they could be a part of the plan.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Councilman Udin received a commitment from Councilwoman Valerie McDonald, and Director Mulugetta Birru to working with the African American Chamber on creating a forum of businesses to discuss not only how African American Businesses will a part of the new retail center, but how they will be included in the development of the new corridor. Representatives from the Urban Retail Properties agreed to continue the dialogue and attend the next meeting. A definite date was not set.