

U.S. Steel looks to diversify

The company wants to work with minority-owned businesses.

BY JOE NAPSHA
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With the Baby Boomer generation eligible for retirement in the next five to 10 years, a large percentage of the next generation of U.S. Steel Corp. employees will be women and minorities, the company's chairman said Friday.

"U.S. Steel is engaged in a battle for human talent. The task at hand is to make U.S. Steel a career destination for these growing segments," John P. Surma told more than 250 business owners, corporate executives and community leaders at the African American Chamber of Commerce's annual luncheon at the Renaissance Pittsburgh Hotel, Downtown.

While the Pittsburgh-based company is relatively new at en-

gaging diversity in terms of specific initiatives, U.S. Steel has already enjoyed ways and benefited from a diverse work force, Surma said.

"With a new diversity initiative under way, however, we are now re-energizing our efforts," Surma said.

Shifting demographics in the U.S. population signal changes for businesses, which will find that their customer base, suppliers and employees will include groups of diverse individuals with diverse backgrounds. So the steelmaker is working to do more business with women and minority-owned suppliers, Surma said.

"We are stepping up our efforts to better engage this growing base of business owners," Surma said.

U.S. Steel already is responsible for making its work force more diverse by exchanging tal-



Surma

ent between the U.S. and Central Europe, where the company operates plants in Slovakia and Serbia. Some U.S. Steel employees from America have gone to Europe for temporary and long-term assignments, and workers from those countries have come to the U.S. to learn about the domestic operations, Surma said.

The African American Chamber of Commerce, with about 436 members, strives to improve business and professional opportunities for black business owners. There were 3,142 black-owned businesses employing about 4,030 workers in the Pittsburgh region, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 1997 economic census for the region. More than one-half of those firms — 1,567 — were involved in service industries.

The chamber honored two men who helped it connect to the corporate community in its early days: Thomas J. Usher, former chairman of U.S. Steel, and Richard Simmons, chairman emeritus of Allegheny Technologies Inc.

Black-owned businesses in Pittsburgh region

■ Black-owned firms: 3,142; \$319.1 million in sales

■ Total minority-owned firms: 6,779; \$1.3 billion in sales

■ All firms: 159,845; \$180.2 billion in sales

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1997 Economic Census

They helped to galvanize the corporate community in supporting the African American Chamber and its members, said Doris Carson Williams, the chamber's president.

Usher was the first chairman of the chamber's presidential roundtable.

"In order for the chamber to survive, we had to have corporate support," and they opened the doors, Williams said.