

A Golden Opportunity: Organizers say summit is an international showcase for city

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Four of those tasked with making the Sept. 24-25 G-20 meeting an international showcase for Pittsburgh and the surrounding areas told members of the African American Chamber of Commerce that the Pittsburgh summit would do exactly that.

Allegheny County Councilman Bill Robinson, Pittsburgh Council President Doug Shields, VisitPittsburgh President and CEO Joe McGrath, and Allegheny Conference on Community Development Vice President for Corporate Relations Bill Flanagan joined Chamber President and CEO Doris Carson Williams for an interactive discussion on G-20 at the chamber's Sept. 18 Power Breakfast.



PROMOTING

PITTSBURGH—Doris Carson Williams, African American Chamber of Commerce president and CEO, introduces, from left to right: Bill Flanagan, Doug Shields, Joe McGrath and Bill Robinson, who helped ready the city for the dignitaries, press and protesters coming to the G-20 Summit.

One of the first things McGrath noted was they aren't calling it G-20 because delegates from more than 20 countries will attend.

"The new count is 33 heads of state, that's why we're calling it the Pittsburgh Summit," he said. "I'm guessing this is worth \$100 million in advertising—worldwide. Even if we had the money to do that, who'd listen? It took 150 years to get the reputation as a smoky, gritty, working-class city. It's going to take a little while to tell people about being a high tech and medical center. We should look at the long-term gain to business rather than what's lost in two days."

Asked whether there would be a benefit for Black-owned businesses, Williams pointedly said, "This isn't about us."

"This is about the president bringing heads of state to the convention center," she said. "If you have a business Downtown, great."

Flanagan, however, said the long-term prospect for Black business is very good.

"The people coming here represent two-thirds of the world's population. I guarantee you two-thirds of the world population isn't White," he said. "Organizations owned by people of color from Europe, Asia and Africa will be here and they expect to deal with a

diverse business community."

Robinson noted that though U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Pa., found \$10 million in federal funds, the state donated about \$4 million to cover 700 state police, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security came through with a \$4 million grant, there are likely to be additional costs related to public safety and the county court system.

"When everyone goes home—and we're still here, someone's going to hand us a bill," he said. "And next year the taxpayers are going to have to absorb it, unless Mike Doyle or Barack Obama come up with the money."

Flanagan said it will not be in anyone's interests if the federal government stiffes the city.

"They can't leave us holding the bag," he said. "If they do, no one will ever agree to do it again. We will get reimbursed."

Shields said he believes the costs will be negligible and that the "threat" to public safety was over-hyped by the media.

"I've been trying to make sure our 'other guests' have their First Amendment rights protected," he said. "These are a diverse group of people with legitimate concerns—global warming, the wars, health care, international banking. And instead of doing stories on that, or the Tibetan monks who are here, they've all been lumped together as 'the protesters.'"

Flanagan agreed, noting that during the first Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., there were no arrests.

"In London, yeah there were confrontations and one death, but do you know how many arrests there were—100," he said. "We had more arrests than that when the Steelers won the Super Bowl."