

Fitzgerald talks about growth at African American Chamber breakfast

by Christian Morrow
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In what is becoming an annual event, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald spoke at the African American Chamber of Commerce's first PowerBreakfast meeting of the new year. Speaking to a packed room, Fitzgerald acknowledged several county employees, including Public Defender Elliot Howze, MWDBE Director Ruth Byrd Smith and ALCOSAN Executive Director Arletta Scott Williams.

"Arletta is someone you want to know because she's going to be awarding more than \$2 billion in contracts as we move to comply with the (Environmental Protection Agency) consent decree," he said. Fitzgerald also said they should know Port Authority Chairman Bob Hurley because transit is key to the county's growth plans, beginning with the Rapid Bus System he wants in place to connect Downtown and Oakland within three years. He said that is the result of thinking regionally, and working

with neighboring counties and the state on development and infrastructure. Another result is the Shell Cracker plant that, though in Beaver County will employ a lot of people from Alleghen County. But transit-centered development is what he plans to push in the coming year. "Getting that transit bill passed in Harrisburg was huge," Fitzgerald said. "For 15 years, no County executive or commis-

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GOING FOR GROWTH—Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald poses with President and CEO Doris Carson Williams, and guest former Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory, after addressing the African American Chamber of Commerce's first PowerBreakfast meeting of 2014.

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sioner could say to business developers this transit system will be there for you. Now, I can look them in the eye and tell them it will."

He also noted that unlike other regions, Allegheny County has multiple growing industries.

"Manufacturing, steel, finance, of course energy, IT, the movies—Russell Crowe is coming back again. He loves it here—and the 'Eds and Meds.' All of these are growth areas, and we have them."

He said he expects to see tremendous investment and development in Uptown and the Fifth Avenue corridor related to Rapid Bus. Asked about light rail expansion, perhaps toward the airport, Fitzgerald said it would probably make more sense to expand from the North Shore and follow I-79 out to Cranberry.

Fitzgerald also told the audience that it would not be the same 'old guard' political cronies benefitting

ment and contracts.

"Diversity is the hallmark of my administration. In my two years, 23 percent of our new hires have been African-Americans," he said. "On contracts, 20 percent of Public Works contracts went to Black firms, service and vendor contracts; 16 percent, Economic Development; \$2.6 million and Human Services; \$127 million. We're making sure there are new faces at the table, not the same old-boy network."

After thanking Fitzgerald for being a good friend of the chamber, President and CEO Doris Carson Williams welcomed new members, thanked all who attended their December events and announced upcoming events including a strategic planning workshop, Jan. 21; a members' intro to doing business with Coca-Cola, Feb. 11, and PowerBreakfast with Pitt Business professor Paul Harper, Feb. 21.

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