Obama Thanks Mayors, Signs New Transportation Law

Villaraigosa-Led TIFIA Financing Program to Raise Investment Levels

By Kevin McCarty

Conference of Mayors President Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter, joined by other Conference of Mayors leaders, praised Congress for enacting new federal surface transportation legislation, authorizing more than $100 billion over the next two fiscal years in funding for the nation’s highways, bridges and transit systems.

“The nation’s mayors commend Congress for finally acting, and after more than 1,000 days of operating under short-term extensions, we will end the cycle of uncertainty that has threatened jobs and new investment in our cities and their metro economies. With this cloud lifted, mayors and other local leaders can now use the resources this agreement provides to improve the performance of our transportation systems,” said Nutter in his comments on the new surface transportation law.

The final legislation, “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century,” authorizes more than $100 billion over the next two fiscal years in funding for the nation’s highways, bridges and transit systems.

Conference of Mayors Immediate Past President Los Angeles Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa, left front.

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Recognizing Conference Immediate Past President Los Angeles Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa for his leadership on his America Fast Forward proposal, Nutter said, “Its new financing options will help ensure more jobs are created and our economy grows.”

The final legislation, “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century,” authorizes about $40.6 billion annually in highway funding and about $10.65 billion annually in transit funding through fiscal year 2014 and replaces the SAFE-TEA-LU law, which was enacted in 2005 and first expired September 30, 2009.

Conference of Mayors Leaders Join with President Obama

President Barack Obama signed the measure into law (P.L. 111-141) at a July 6 signing ceremony, where Villaraigosa and other Conference of Mayors leaders took part. “I’m very appreciative of the hard work that Congress has done on it. My hope is that this bipartisan spirit spills over into the next phase, that we can start putting more construction workers back to work – not just those that were already on existing projects who were threatened to be laid off, but also getting some new projects done that are vitally important to communities all across the nation and that will improve our economy, as well as making sure that now that we’ve prevented a doubling of student loan rates, we actually start doing more to reduce the debt burden that our young people are experiencing,” he said.

Obama renewed his call to Congress to act on his nation-building initiative, a proposal that allocates a portion of the savings from ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to investment in infrastructure. “And for months, I’ve been calling on Congress to take half the money we’re no longer spending on war and use it to do some nation-building here at home. There’s work to be done building roads and bridges and wireless networks. There are hundreds of thousands of construction workers that are ready to do it.”

During his remarks, the President also recognized Villaraigosa and the mayors. “We’ve got Mayor Villaraigosa and Governor O’Malley here as representatives of organizations of mayors and governors who know how desperate we need to do some of this work.”

“The passage of this transportation bill signals that Congress is still able to set aside partisan differences in order to invest in our nation’s critical infrastructure. Mayors know first-hand the importance of streets, highways and bridges to economic opportunity. This bill will help ensure that our cities continue on the path of recovery and job creation,” said Conference of Mayors Vice President Mesa Mayor Scott Smith, who attended the signing ceremony.

Also at the White House event was Conference of Mayors Transportation and Communications Committee Chair Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, who applauded the action. “Investing in infrastructure is vital for the long-term economic health and competitiveness of our nation. The approval today of the surface transportation renewal bill by Congress is a major step forward for the country. We must continue to put partisan differences aside and work together to ensure our roads and bridges are in good repair, both for now and the future.”

America Fast Forward Touted

“America Fast Forward is a path-breaking program that will dramatically accelerate transportation projects across the country. The Surface Transportation Bill will preserve two million jobs. With the inclusion of America Fast Forward,
Obama Signs Transportation Bill

There were times in recent weeks when the best of political minds doubted we would ever get another piece of infrastructure legislation. With the exception of the Obama stimulus, we had not passed a national surface transportation bill since 2005.

America came together to pass the transportation bill. No one worked harder or worked harder than our immediate past President LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. He never stopped. There was a “sign-on” letter listing hundreds of mayors almost every other month. Mayor Villaraigosa was a catalyst that brought the President of the AFL-CIO, the Chamber of Commerce, Republican House Chairman John Mica, and Democratic Senate Committee Chair Barbara Boxer to a press conference on the Hill to proclaim publicly the need to pass the transportation bill which includes the “America Fast Forward” initiative conceived and championed by Mayor Villaraigosa.

At the bill signing last Friday, President Obama gave a shout out to our organization and Mayor Villaraigosa and his hard work on this legislation. President Obama also reached out to shake the hand of our Vice President Mesa Mayor Scott Smith.

USA Infrastructure Needs – it’s more than a transportation bill

While we applauded the passing of the transportation bill, we realize that with the exception of the “Fast Forward” initiative it is basically a flat funded bill. And due to the crumbling infrastructure and the infrastructure investments we cannot afford not to invest in, our new President, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter calls our leadership to Philadelphia to write and come forth with a new way of defining the infrastructure needs of the nation. It’s more than asphalt or another paved country road where pine trees live and people don’t. It’s about the cyber spinal cord of our nation that runs through our work, our learning and our recreation. It’s about community colleges and university/city partnerships. It’s about a safe city with the best security infrastructure. It’s about deferred maintenance across the board and it’s about investments for a stronger more competitive nation.

What we are hearing from both Republican and Democratic mayors is that they are working with their business communities as partners to rebuild and maintain our infrastructure; we are not letting the federal government off the hook.

We have heard leaders using the global competitive rhetoric over and over from both parties. We hear President Obama and Governor Romney both supporting the fact that we must face the global competitiveness in the world economy.

If we are going to have a stronger economy and remain competitive we must have smarter investments. Today, USA infrastructure is ranked 24th out of 124 countries by the World Economic Forum.

According to a report by the Council on Foreign Relations, the USA spends 1.6 percent of GDP on infrastructure and 52.7 percent is the average amount by which other developed nations outspend the USA.

China plans to build 50 new airports by 2015. South Korea started high-speed rail in 2004 and 200 mph bullet trains crisscross the country; Seoul announces $15 billion will be spent on upgrades. The United Kingdom will spend $47 billion over the next decade on rail and transportation projects. Canada will boost her trade, upgrading routes to ports that service Asian markets with a $3.4 billion investment. Norway will spend 50 billion through 2019 to double rail terminal capacity and to modernize the nation’s ports. Over the past 20 years, Spain built 43 International Airports and the largest high-speed rail network in Europe.

President Obama has stated many times over the past few months that we must end the wars abroad and now be about the business of rebuilding our own nation. His vision is to take what we are spending on the wars and convert one half for deficit reduction and the other half for rebuilding our USA infrastructure.

As the Presidential campaign goes forward, through the Conventions and into the General Election, Governor Romney will share with us his vision of what we as a nation must do to have a top ranked infrastructure in a top ranked economy.

Mayor Nutter’s goal, supported by Republican Vice President Mesa Mayor Scott Smith and other mayors is to bring forth to the nation an infrastructure plan that America cannot afford not to invest in and implement as we go forward. Finalized, our mayors’ infrastructure action agenda, Building A Better America, will be our recommendation to President Obama and Governor Romney as they face each other this fall. Mayors want to hear from both on the infrastructure issue in more detail. We plan to be active in asking for more specifics as to what they will do, not just talk about, when they take the oath in January.

Our organization is pledged to push our agenda forward. Both candidates, both parties will be better for it – and in the long run our nation will be better for it. When it’s all said and done the election should be more based on what our new President will do. It is in that spirit that we will push for a more substantive discussion because it’s our future and mayors have no choice.
TRANSPORTATION
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it will put close to an additional million Americans to work,” said Villaraigosa in his comments on the new law.

“Working in partnership with The U.S. Conference of Mayors, we assembled a broad, bipartisan coalition, including nearly 200 mayors and both the AFL-CIO and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, to bring America Fast Forward to fruition. America Fast Forward expands an existing program – the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) program – to give cities access to low-interest financing with flexible terms for their projects. With America Fast Forward in place, cities across America will be able to speed up the construction of locally funded road and rail projects and get our economy moving again,” he said.

Threats to Transit Turned Back
In the end, Congressional leaders embraced a strong and continuing funding commitment to public transportation, affirming the bipartisan consensus set forth in the Senate renewal legislation. In authorizing a total of $10.6 billion in transit funding for the new fiscal year, this represents a big victory for mayors, local leaders and others, turning back an earlier House plan that removed all transit funding for the new fiscal year, and provided uncertain future funding commitments.

Notably, the new law restructures and consolidates a number of existing transit programs administered by the Federal Transit Administration, and it also streamlines federal review and approval processes for new start and other federally-assisted transit investments, promising to shorten the time needed to initiate and complete projects.

Highway Programs Consolidated
In addition to providing substantially higher investment ($750 million in FY13 and $1 billion in FY14) in the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA), the new law also consolidates numerous highway and safety programs and streamlines the project delivery process, with an emphasis on expanding what qualifies for “categorical exclusions” under the National Environmental Policy Act.

More than 60 programs have been either eliminated or consolidated, structuring federal highway assistance around four “core” formula programs. In reaching an agreement, House and Senate negotiators vigorously debated the fate of the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program, agreeing to reduce the overall funding level for selected TE eligibilities and other related program activi-

Legislation Freezes Student Loan Interest Rates

Included in the legislation signed by President Obama was a bipartisan agreement to hold interest rates on federal Stafford loans at 3.4 percent for another year. If Congress and the Administration had not acted, the interest rate on these loans would have doubled to 6.8 percent.

Before signing the bill, the President said that it was time for Washington to “start doing more to reduce the debt burden that our young people are experiencing.” The U.S. Conference of Mayors supported this freeze, unanimously adopting a resolution on this issue during its 80th Annual Meeting in Orlando.

WASHINGTON OUTLOOK

Support Builds for Passing Marketplace Fairness Bill

By Larry Jones

Since last November, grassroots support from businesses on Main Street, mayors, governors and other elected leaders across the country has been building for legislation that would grant state and local governments the authority they need to require the collection of taxes on online shopping. Under existing law (the Supreme Court’s 1992 decision in Quill Corp. v. North Dakota) state and local governments are prohibited from requiring out-of-state merchants, such as those who sell goods and services exclusively online and through mail-order-soldes, to collect their sales taxes.

Since they are not required to collect taxes (which can range from five to ten percent on average), online merchants have had an unfair competitive advantage over their Main Street competitors. Some Main Street merchants have complained that more and more customers are coming in their retail outlets to try on or examine merchandise only to order it online. That could all change soon if a bipartisan group of Senators are successful in moving the Marketplace Fairness Act, S. 1832, which could level the playing field.

The Conference of Mayors and other state and local groups have endorsed the Marketplace Fairness Act, which enjoys strong bipartisan support and is being spearheaded in the Senate by Senators Richard Durbin (IL), Michael Enzi (WY) and Lamar Alexander (TN). If enacted, state and local governments will have the option of collecting an estimated $23 billion nationwide in taxes due on online sales. These taxes are currently due because most states have passed laws requiring their residents to voluntarily submit sales taxes on purchases made online when submitting their state income taxes. But with no way of keeping track of online purchases, residents almost never submit these taxes. The Marketplace Fairness Act will provide an enforcement mechanism to collect these taxes.

The sponsors of S. 1832 are looking for any opportunity to pass the legislation. Although the bill enjoys bipartisan support, it is unlikely to move forward
House Passes HUD FY13 Funding with CDBG Spending Increase

Subcommittee Chairman Tom Latham (IA) and his subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development recommended the funding increases to CDBG and HOME. But even with those increases, the Administration strongly opposed passage of the bill, and President Obama’s Senior Advisers said that they would recommend the bill be vetoed. At issue for the Administration is the bill’s “lack of funding for the TIGER Grants” and the “bill’s failure to provide additional funding for High Speed Rail grants,” HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods initiative and Sustainable Communities were not added. In its criticism of the bill, however, the Administration said that it “…appreciates the Committee’s support for the CDBG program, which provides critical funding to State and local governments to address infrastructure, affordable housing, and economic development needs in their communities.”

During the House floor debate on the bill, two amendments were offered to cut CDBG funding. Representative Jason Chaffetz (UT) offered an amendment to cut funding for the Community Development Fund to the FY12 level. And Representative Tom McClintock (CA) offered an amendment to zero out the Community Development Fund, the CDBG formula grants and the Community Development Loan Guarantees (Section 108) account. Both of these amendments failed.

The funding increase to the HOME program also came under attack during the House debate. Representative Jeff Flake (AZ) offered an amendment to cut HOME funding by $200 million. Representative Flake also offered the amendment during the Appropriations Committee mark up of the bill. The amendment failed both times.

CDBG and HOME are in relatively good positions after action in the House and Senate. Both the House and Senate approved CDBG funding at a higher level than the last fiscal year. While the Senate level funded HOME, the House increased funding for the program. CDBG Coalition (national organizations representing locally elected and appointed officials and national public interests groups) visits with senate staff indicate that no further action will take place on the HUD bill until after the election, which will mean that Congress will have to pass a continuing resolution to fund programs after September 30, the end of fiscal year 2012. This, of course, means that CDBG would be funded at its current level of $2.948 billion and HOME at $1 billion until after November when Congress will return to Washington.

House Passed Farm Bill Slashes Food Stamp Program By $16 billion

By Abigail Lundy

The House of Representatives Agriculture Committee passed a 2012 Farm Bill, called the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management (FARRM) Act that calls for $16.1 billion in cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This amount represents more than three times the amount proposed by Senate-passed farm bill (S.3240).

In June, the United States Senate released their version of the bill. Both cut from the SNAP and conservation and commodity programs to achieve long-term savings. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the House version saves $35 billion over the next ten years, while the bi-partisan Senate version saves $23 billion. The difference comes entirely from SNAP cuts.

Earlier this year, the Conference of Mayors identified several key Farm Bill priorities for cities. These included maintaining SNAP funding; strengthening the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP); assuring full funding for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program; increasing healthy food choices for vulnerable populations, strengthening agriculture conservation programs, and supporting local food systems.

The $16.1 billion cut from SNAP in the House Agriculture Committee’s version comes largely by eliminating “categorical eligibility,” a state option that disburses SNAP benefits based on a family’s disposable income, rather than their gross income. Because of this cut, the CBO estimates that 2-3 million people will stop receiving food assistance and 280,000 low-income children will lose access to free school meals because they are no longer on SNAP. The House version also eliminates the state incentive program, which rewards agencies implementing SNAP effectively and efficiently. Like its Senate counterpart, the House version raises the minimum Low Income Housing Energy Assistance Program payment from $5 to $10.

In promising news, the House maintained the Community Supplemental Food Program, provides $200 million in additional funding through TEFAP for food banks over the next ten years, and allocates $10 million per year for ten years in additional funding for Community Food Projects. It also authorizes USDA to test programs to better connect farmers markets and stands with SNAP recipients through new technologies. Lastly, it extends the authority of the Farmers Market Promotion Program and the Farmers Market and Local Food Development program to fund food hubs and provides $70 million for Specialty Crop Block Grants.

On the other side, the House maintained the modest budget for the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program, but expanded the program’s scope to include WIC benefits; in effect, this reduced funding for the seniors’ program. The House also eliminates the requirement that the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program use fresh foods and does not fund Healthy Food Financing Initiatives. The House cut $6 billion from conservation initiatives, primarily through the consolidation of programs, and established a 25 million acre cap for the Conservation Reserve Program, while only funding it at $25 million over 5 years. In 2008, this same amount of funding ran out in 18 months. Lastly, the House version provides no mandatory money for the Energy Title programs.

The full House of Representatives will now debate and vote on the FARRM Act and then the House and Senate will reconcile their two versions.

MARKETPLACE

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this year as a separate bill. However, it could be added as an amendment to critical legislation that Congressional leaders agree must be considered before Congress adjourns. On July 10, the sponsors filed the bill as an amendment to the Small Business Jobs and Tax Relief Act (S. 2237), which would provide tax credits to companies that hire new workers. Although the Senate voted 80 – 14 on the same day to begin consideration of the Small Business Jobs bill, no decision has been made to allow a vote on the Marketplace Fairness Act amendment. Sponsors are expected to keep trying until they are successful in winning agreement to allow a vote on the Marketplace Fairness Act.
Jacksonville, Norfolk Receive DollarWISE Summer Youth Campaign Grant

By Staff Writer

Jacksonville

The DollarWISE Campaign visited Jacksonville Mayor Alvin Brown on June 18 to award the city a Summer Youth Campaign grant to incorporate financial education into the Mayor’s Summer Jobs Program (MSJP). In attendance with the mayor were: Grants Administrator Cherriise Wilkes, members of the of the city’s Office of Performance Management, and about 175 students who were there to begin their jobs with an orientation that covered workplace behavior and expectations.

MSJP is a six to eight week program designed to employ youth from low-income neighborhoods. The intent is to give participants the opportunity to learn employment skills, and on the job training while contributing to their community through public service.

The curriculum consists of three modules: business etiquette, public service and giving back. Local dignitaries participate as coaches addressing youth about local and global planning. Once training is completed, youth are partnered with experienced public servants to receive on the job training and are shown how gratifying public service can be for internal/external constituents. The public servants serve as mentors to all participants.

Brown arrived shortly after the youth finished watching a movie made for these orientations. Once there, the mayor gave a rousing pep talk to the youth in the room. “Are you excited?” shouted the mayor. “YES!” responded the room.

“I want you guys to look around,” Brown continued as he paused to look around the room. “All of you are here because your mayor, your city, and your community care about you and your future. This is an opportunity for you to

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• Encouraging the use of technology to decrease the digital divide in low-income households by expanding MSJP participants’ knowledge of mobile and online banking, reviewing stocks/savings/retirement strategies, and virtual budget modules.

Norfolk

The DollarWISE’s Summer Youth Campaign seeks to incorporate a financial education component into every summer job in the nation by 2015. Mayors from all over the country have made a commitment to financial education within their summer jobs programs.

Around every November, The U.S. Conference of Mayors DollarWISE Campaign opens the Summer Youth Campaign Grants application process to member cities of the Conference of Mayors. Five cities are chosen to receive a $4,000 grant each to incorporate a financial literacy component into their summer jobs program. The DollarWISE Campaign is generously funded by the Bank of America Charitable Foundation.

In Norfolk on May 26, Mayor Paul Fraim pushed forward with his city’s commitment to financial education within its Norfolk Emerging Leaders program (NEL). NEL is a summer jobs program whose goal is to expand opportunities for Norfolk youth to obtain the skills needed for meaningful professional careers and involvement in community service. For six weeks during the summer, youth participants are given work assignments in city departments.

Fraim told NEL participants that their city needed them to make the most out of their opportunity in the summer program. The mayor also took the moment to “wholeheartedly thank The U.S. Conference of Mayors’ DollarWISE Campaign and Bank of America” for their support of his city’s summer jobs program.

The DollarWISE grant will allow Norfolk to expand the existing training module of the NEL program to include a more robust financial literacy component that will include developing a savings plan, opening a checking account, understanding a paycheck and taxes, understanding credit and credit cards, paying bills, and investing and reading stocks. In addition, the financial module will incorporate activities such as a financial literacy fair, role-playing, and financial literacy games as a way to help youth better understand financial planning.

The Summer Youth Campaign grant award will help expand Jacksonville’s financial literacy efforts through a three-pronged approach:

- Encouraging long-term savings, educating participants on the benefits of planning for retirement, and providing a hands-on financial workshop during the business module;
- Encouraging savings by incentivizing ten percent of participants who pledge and demonstrate that they saved a minimum of $600 of their earnings during the MSJP; and
Mayors Lead Discussions at First Conference of Mayors
US-China Economic Summit

By Tom McClimon

U.S. and Chinese mayors met in Nanjing, China, June 22-23 for the first United States Conference of Mayors sponsored U.S.-China Forum on Economic Cooperation and Investment. Mayors and city officials from 22 American cities were joined by 29 mayors from major Chinese cities in discussing areas of possible investment. They were joined by over 300 Chinese businesspersons, and Chinese and American national government officials.

Led by Conference of Mayors Vice President Mesa Mayor Scott Smith, the Conference of Mayors delegation included: Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings, Des Moines Mayor T.M Franklin Cownie, Tallahassee Mayor John Marks, and Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran. Mayors and/or city council members from Manhattan Beach, Arcadia, Beverly Hills, Glendale, Santa Monica, Palos Verdes Estates, Burbank, and Malibu also participated along with representatives from Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington (DC) San Antonio, Richmond (CA), Fort Worth, and Waynesboro.

During the meeting, 42 project agreements totaling over $3.4 billion in Chinese investment in the United States were signed. At the meeting, the mayors and city officials met with their Chinese counterparts to work on securing similar agreements that can be signed at a later date.

“Cities are the center of the world economy,” stated Smith. “The relationship between the U.S. and China will continue to grow. We have much to learn from one another.”

“As direct federal funds for cities in the U.S. continue to diminish, The U.S. Conference of Mayors continues to support the increase of the world market share of the exporting our goods and services. We are also increasing our organizational efforts to serve as a catalyst in securing foreign investments to our cities. Mayors are stepping up and are supported by key U.S. federal departments such as Commerce, Treasury, State and the Office of Trade Commissioner,” said Cochran.

The two day meeting was divided into two parts: the first day was devoted to economic activity being generated in and around Nanjing and its neighboring cities in Jiangsu Province; and the second day was mainly a U.S-China Mayors Policy Forum. Rawlings addressed the participants on Nanjing day as Dallas has a special economic relationship with Nanjing. “We are proud of our friendship. Cities in China and the U.S. must work together to foster ideals for better ways.”

Members of USCM delegation witness signing of over $3.4 billion in Chinese investment in U.S.

U.S.-China Mayors Policy Forum
As part of the U.S.-China Cities Economic Forum, the Conference of Mayors and the China Association of Mayors sponsored a U.S.-China Mayors Policy Forum to examine policy issues which impact Chinese investment in the United States, such as infrastructure investment and financing, promoting service sector development, and the development of small and medium-sized businesses.

Opening remarks were made by Madam Tao Siliang, Executive Director of the China Association of Mayors, and Cochran, who stated that the “economic thrust of this meeting puts the relationship between our two organizations on a new plateau.”

Smith and Santa Monica Mayor Richard Bloom helped to kick off the discussions on the first panel on infrastructure investment and financing. Smith talked about the need for mayors to get creative on financing for infrastructure, while Bloom talked about how Southern California has been most aggressive in transportation infrastructure, particularly bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Cownie and Washington (DC) Deputy Mayor Victor Hoskins led the discussion on promoting service sector development. Cownie talked about the importance that the service sector plays in his city, making Des Moines one of the largest insurance capitals in the world. Mayor Hoskins stated how important service sectors jobs are to the nation’s capital.

Rawlings and Marks kicked off the discussion on ways to assist small and medium sized businesses. Rawlings cautioned against allowing big businesses to control everything while Marks stressed the importance of making sure that the workforce meets the needs of these businesses.

Smith wrapped up the meeting by stating, “Meetings, such as this one, help U.S. and Chinese cities to cooperate and learn from one another.”
Kiplinger’s Personal Finance recently released a feature on the “10 Great Cities to Raise Your Kids,” honoring cities for their leadership in creating family-friendly communities. Kiplinger’s found metropolitan areas with high income relative to living costs, low crime rates, and large numbers of families, and then it identified the cities within each metropolitan area with both strong educational factors and recreation options. Honorees included East Grand Rapids (MI), Appleton (WI), Sunnyvale (CA), Thousand Oaks (CA), Corona (CA), Suwanee (GA), Stamford (CT), Richland (WA), Omaha (NE), and Middletown (NY).

Calendar of Events

(Updated 07/13/12)

2012

September 11-13
2012 Municipal Waste Management Association (MWMA) Fall Summit, Lexington (KY). Contact: Jubi Headley (202-861-6798)

September 23-24
Developing Next Generation Leadership in Cities Through Workforce Development, Dallas. Contact: Kathy Wiggins (202-861-6723)

2013

January 17-19

NEW: June 21-24
81st Annual Conference of Mayors, Las Vegas. Contact: Carol Edwards (202-293-7330). Registration Available February 2013

For updates or changes, visit our web site at usmayors.org

Schaumburg Celebrates Award-Winning Intergenerational Produce Garden

Left to right, Barn Seniors Jean Ulijasz and Louise Daleno, Health and Human Services Supervisor DuRee Bryant, Senior Services Coordinator Kiran Chaturvedi, Community Services Director Kathleen Tempesta, Teen Center member Dave Shepard, USCM staff member Jocelyn Bogen, Village President Al Larson, Senior Advisory Committee Tom Conaway, Waste Management Joy Squier, Horticulturist John Craft, Teen Center member Brianne Reilly, Engineering & Public Works Foreman Scott Finnander, and Waste Management Bill Plunkett.

Mayors Business Council Member Profile

DuPont

DuPont is a science-based products and services company. Founded in 1802, DuPont puts science to work by creating sustainable solutions essential to a better, safer, healthier life for people everywhere. Operating in more than 70 countries, DuPont offers a wide range of innovative products and services for markets including agriculture and food, building and construction, communications, and transportation.


For more Business Council profiles visit the Conference of Mayors website at usmayors.org/buscouncil

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Registration Available October 2012
Helping Gresham’s Small Businesses Lead the Way to Recovery

By Gresham Mayor Shane Bemis

It is no secret in our communities that the past few years have brought historic volatility in the investment and lending markets and terrifying national unemployment rates hovering for far too long in the double digits. Given these circumstances, it was easy to forget the basic, reliable element that has always helped us claw out of deep recessions: the entrepreneurial and enterprising spirit of our citizens.

Gresham City Council doubled down on that maxim in 2010 by approving our cutting edge “Garage to Storefront” small business incentive program. The pitch was simple: If you have the next great idea and are ready to bring it to market, we will do everything possible to get out of your way and help you fill a previously vacant storefront in our city.

Cities across the country have a number of fees and charges associated with opening small businesses. These include business license fees, parks, water, and sewer system development charges, traffic impact fees, and building and planning review fees. All of these fees and charges fund important services, but during times of economic uncertainty and tough credit markets, they can be enough of a barrier to market entry that they impede the type of economic growth that we desperately need right now.

Recognizing that these uncharted conditions called for very aggressive measures, Gresham decided to forgive all of these fees and charges for qualifying small businesses. Entrepreneurs opening up shop in previously vacant storefronts in key areas of our city need not owe us a single dollar in fees. While this requires sacrifices in our city budget in order to offset the costs, we reached the conclusion that inaction would be even more expensive in the long run.

The results were quick and clear. In less than three years of existence, the Garage to Storefront program has helped locate 64 new small businesses, including a natural grocer, a cupcake shop, new restaurants, candy and frozen yogurt shops, and boutiques. Not only will these businesses employ local residents and spark new economic activity, but they are exactly the types of businesses that we have worked to attract to our downtown core for years.

While our program was designed to recruit businesses and stimulate economic activity, we also endeavored to improve livability by filling previously vacant and blighted storefronts in our city centers. On this front, the results have been particularly exciting. Businesses locating through this program have collectively filled over 100,000 square feet of retail space. For a visual comparison, these businesses have resurrected roughly eight football fields worth of previously empty, blighted storefronts in key areas of our city.

This recession has been a strong reminder of the importance of responding locally to global economic conditions. Helping small businesses expand and locate in our cities will be fruitful in many other areas of society as well. Along with being efficient economic engines, small businesses are terrific contributors to local non-profit organizations, schools, and community events. In addition, dollars spent locally can circulate many times in the local economy, providing a synergy that cannot be found on the internet or through mega retailers.

Gresham has attracted attention for its efforts to recruit large-scale investment from the clean technology and manufacturing industries, and with good cause. We are home to great traded-sector companies like Microchip Technology, ON Semiconductor, and Boeing. These are fantastic employers and great community partners, but large-scale investment like this is only part of the equation. Small businesses collectively are the largest employer in the United States, and we should never ignore their deep potential to jump-start the economy.

The absolute simplicity of our program makes it duplicable in nearly any city in America. When flexible and aggressive, local governments and small businesses can partner to create vital jobs and economic investment. As we push our collective boundaries and improve the business climates in each of our communities, we will be taking the type of action that is needed to jump-start our enterprising small business owners. Despite our prolonged global economic challenges, the underlying American spirits of creativity and entrepreneurship are alive and well. Sometimes they just need one less obstacle along the way.

For more information about Gresham’s incentive program, visit the city’s webpage at www.greshamoregon.gov.

“It was a dream of ours to create a place for families to come. One day we were walking the streets of Historic Downtown Gresham and saw a sign in the window promoting the Small Business Incentives Program. We both jumped at the chance and are so happy to be in the heart of downtown Gresham.”

— Debbie Eggens and Janelle Mikula, co-owners, iCandy, 312 N. Main Ave.