

Commercial revitalization in Milwaukee

Recommendations for a more robust
approach

June 17, 2014

White paper highlights

- Trends affecting commercial corridors
- Spring, 2014 survey of Business Improvement District directors (50% response rate)
- Best practices research
 - Urban Land Institute
 - LISC
 - Fannie Mae
- Observations of Milwaukee's situation by outside experts
- Recommendations/actions

Challenging trends

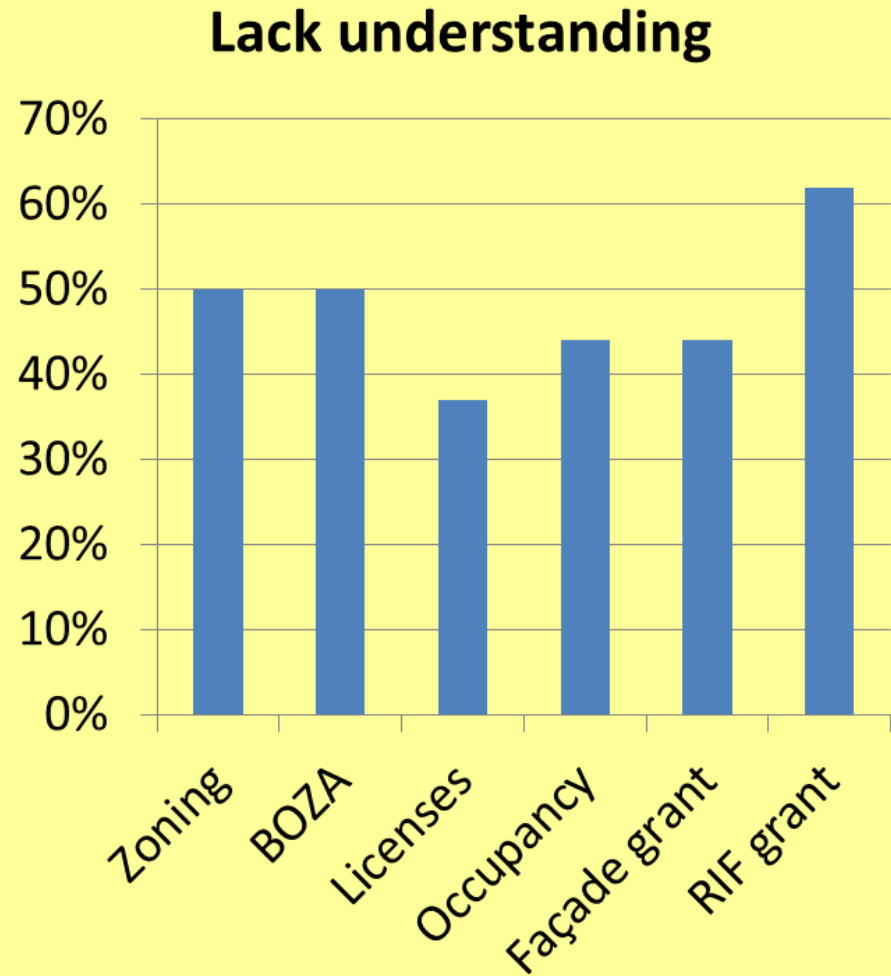
- Weakening markets in many neighborhood commercial corridors
 - Population loss
 - Declining income
- Increased competition
 - Development of large retail centers
 - Big box, chain stores, e-commerce

Positive trends

- Growing popularity of urban lifestyles among certain population segments
- Neighborhood commercial corridors offer low-cost space for new businesses
- Decreasing crime in central city

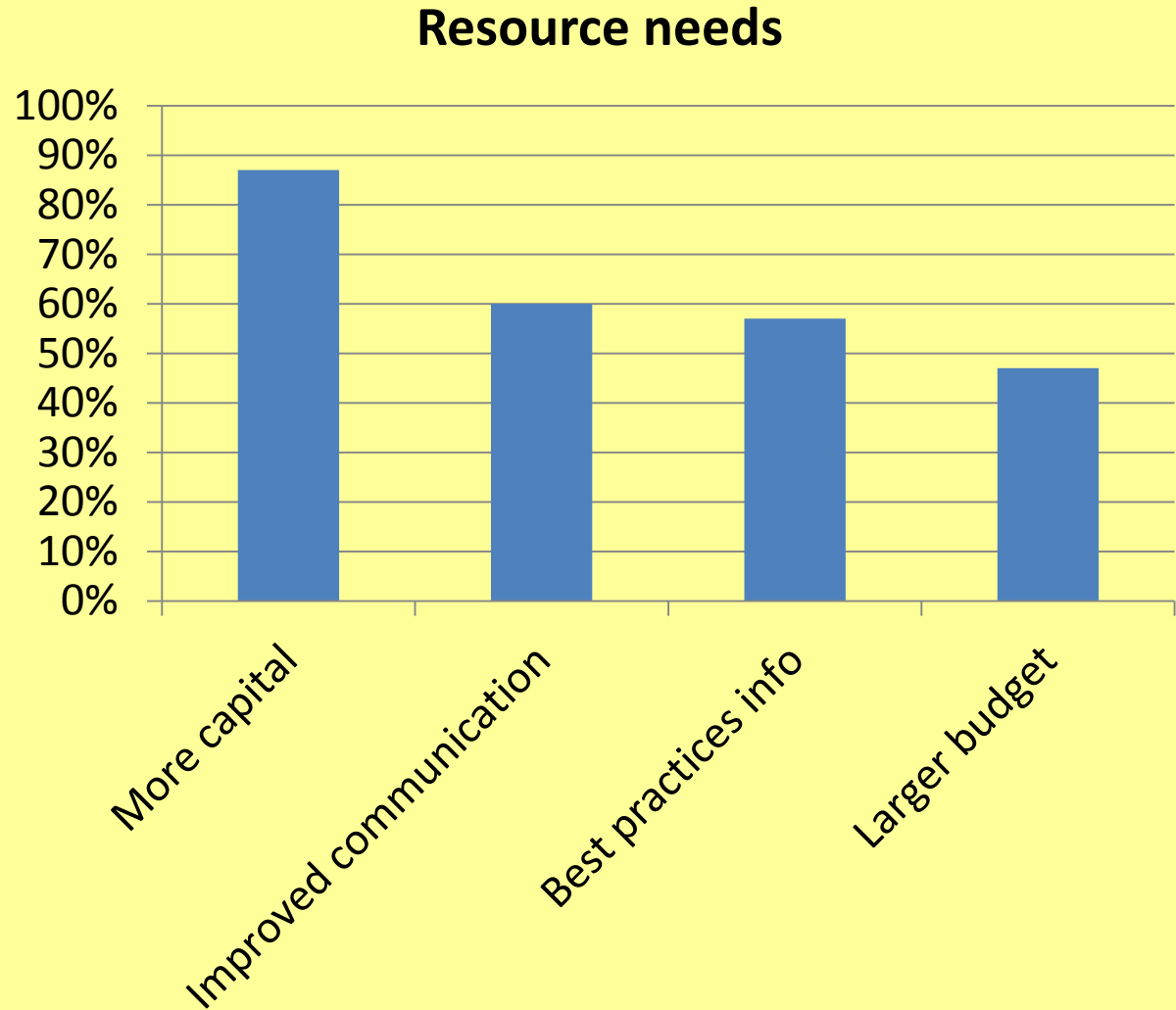
BID director survey

Question: What City processes, programs and regulations need to be better explained in order for you to be more effective in your job?



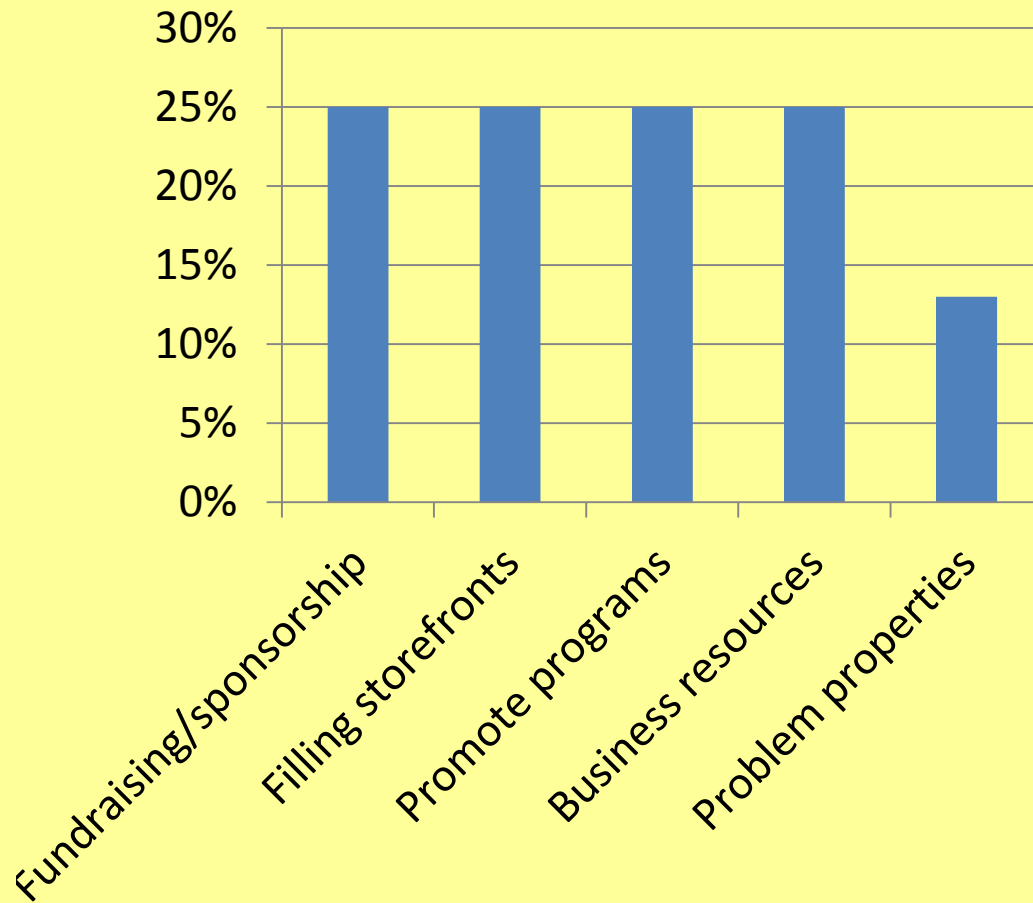
BID director survey

Question:
What
resources
would make
your BID more
effective?



BID director survey

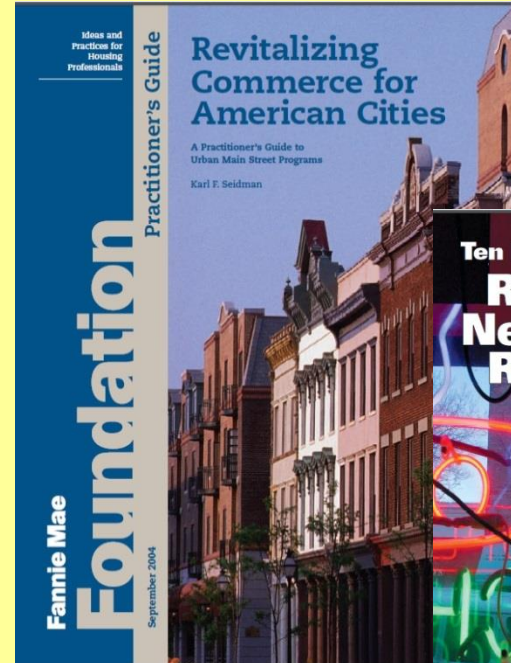
Need training



Question: Would you benefit from training in these job-related functions?

Best practices

- Staff size
- Improve capacity of
BIDs
- Target resource
investment
- Adapt the Main Street
model



**COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS:
A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK
FOR PHILADELPHIA**

Observations

- City should play a greater leadership role to help BIDS become more effective.
- City should create a reporting structure for BIDS.
- City should develop training program for BIDS.
- BIDs are essential to provide capacity for neighborhood revitalization.
- Important to evaluate the development environment before investing in a commercial corridor.

*Robert Walsh, former Commissioner,
New York City Department of Small
Business Services*

*Joel Bookman, former Director of
Programs, LISC-Chicago*

Recommendations

- Improve management, outreach and customer service for core business assistance programs.
 - Make programs more accessible.
 - Establish guaranteed turnaround time.
 - Facilitate applications by immigrant and non-English speaking entrepreneurs.
 - Report program data quarterly to Common Council.

Recommendations

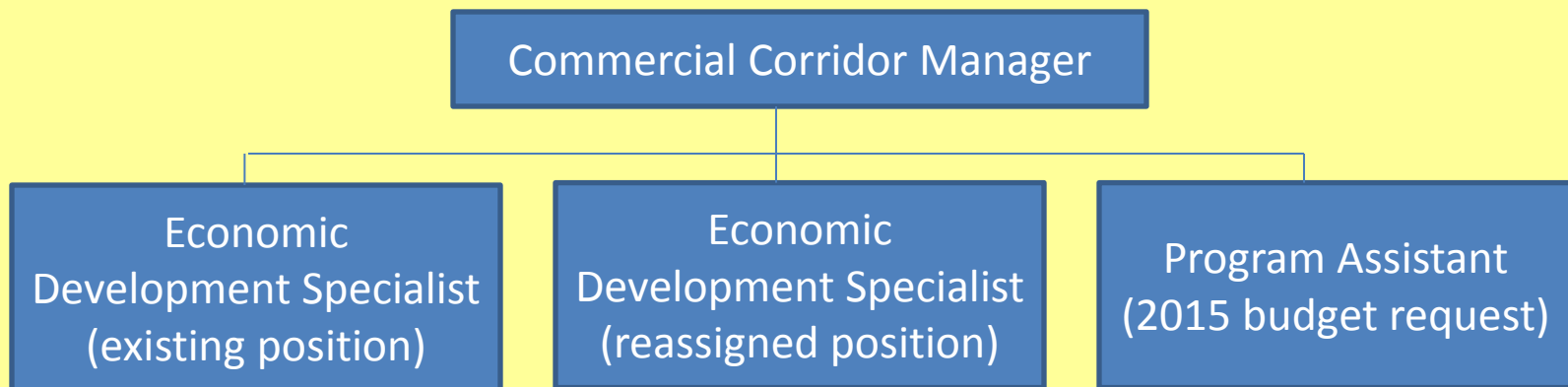
- Improve capacity of Business Improvement Districts to deliver services in commercial corridors.
 - Assign staff liaison to every BID.
 - Technical assistance and leadership training.
 - Collect performance data.
 - Share best practices information among BIDs.

Recommendations

- Ensure that limited public and private commercial resources generate maximum impact.
 - Develop resource targeting strategy.
 - Design handbook to convert surplus space to new uses.
 - Use tax-foreclosed property to leverage neighborhood-based business development.

Actions

- Increase size of commercial revitalization staff.
 - By September 2014, 3 fulltime staff
 - New Commercial Corridor Manager position
 - Reassign Economic Development Specialist position
 - Existing Economic Development Specialist position
 - Seek one additional position in 2015 budget



Actions

- Develop/expand partnerships to support City's commercial revitalization activity.
 - Improve outreach
 - Applications in Spanish and Hmong
 - Training for BID managers
 - City-sponsored business assistance programs
 - Key BID functions with identified training needs needed
 - Main Street Program principles

Actions

- Develop an investment targeting strategy.
- Connect disposition of tax-foreclosed commercial properties to revitalization activities.
 - Design handbook for conversion of surplus commercial space