

# MERCHANT ORGANIZING

NDD Program Requirements

**Merchant Organizing  
Project Day  
March 12, 2014**



# MERCHANT ORGANIZING INITIATIVES ARE THE FIRST STEP IN AN OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR A NEIGHBORHOOD OR CORRIDOR

## Purpose

- Organize & Engage Merchants to Better Serve the Commercial needs of neighborhood residents.
- Address Common Needs Identified by the Merchants on the Corridor.
- Create an Organization of Merchants to Connect the Commercial Corridor with Potential Shoppers
- Develop Programming that Promotes Business Activities & Services

## Long Term Outcomes

- Develop an Overall Economic Development Strategy for the Neighborhood that outlasts the Avenue NYC grant.
- Create a Self Sufficient Not for Profit Org capable of responding to the business and residential needs of the neighborhood.
- Improve Communication Between Businesses and Local Residents
- Create a Membership Dues / Fundraising System
- Strengthen the Economic Activity on the Commercial Corridor

Merchant Organizing is a 1-2 year project, however organizations are encouraged to complete the formative process within the first year if possible.

# IDENTIFYING THE NEED FOR MERCHANT ORGANIZING

## What Currently Exists?

ACTIVITY	POINTS OF INQUIRY
Survey Corridor Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How many businesses are on there on the commercial corridor?</li><li>• What are businesses on the corridor concerned about?</li><li>• How can organizing businesses increase the level of services provided to local residents?</li><li>• What is the retail vacancy rate?</li><li>• What properties are available for rent or purchase?</li><li>• Are property and business owners engaged and open to the time commitment?</li><li>• Does the corridor have potential to grow a merchants association into a self sustaining entity?</li></ul>
TOOLS	Survey, Meetings, Brainstorming Sessions, Organization (Excel)

# THE PROCESS OF FORMING A MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

## Beginning the Merchant Organizing Project

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Develop Steering Committee and Executive Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify merchants capable of playing an active role in the formation and leadership of a merchants association (detail responsibilities, time commitments, and prospect of daily management.)</li></ul>
Establish a purpose for the merchants association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Develop a set of goals that respond to the identified corridor needs and challenges.</li><li>Solidify goals into a purpose or mission statement which can be communicated to neighborhood stakeholders</li></ul>
Create an Information Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Engage steering committee to assist in the development of a database containing property and business owners, and commercial vacancies.</li></ul>
TOOLS	Survey, Meetings, Organization (Excel), Document Sharing Platform, Collaborative

# THE PROCESS OF FORMING A MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

## Solidifying The Organization

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Establish a Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify who from the engaged merchants or steering committee is willing to serve on the newly created, post-incorporation Board of Directors; Ensure that this group understands the responsibilities of the merchants association and is willing to assume a leadership role.</li> </ul>
Legal Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify an attorney who can draft and file certificate of incorporation, IRS non-profit filings and develop bylaws that capture and promote the purpose of the organization.</li> </ul>
Establish Membership Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solidify the organization's purpose in a message to potential merchant members; Also communicate this message to the neighborhood residents.</li> </ul>
Develop a Strategic Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an overall strategic plan that out lasts the Avenue NYC grant and that has been approved by the Board/ Steering Committee. The strategic plan should respond to the needs of the commercial corridor and the neighborhood, and create an organization which is able to address future needs.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a method for communicating this plan / activities to the neighborhood community.</li> </ul>
TOOLS	<p>Lawyer (pro-bono or retained); leadership meetings; votes; sign in sheets (indicating participation)</p>



# THE PROCESS OF FORMING A MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

## Developing the Organization

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Board Meetings and an Annual Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following formal incorporation, board meetings should occur quarterly; regular merchant meetings should occur. The organization must hold an annual meeting within 1 year of incorporation to allow merchants members' input into the organization.</li> </ul>
Corporate Formalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization must consistently adhere to the newly voted on and approved bylaws.</li> </ul>
Plan and Host Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan and host events that leverage merchant participation with community involvement benefitting both businesses and residents. Events should highlight the added services that are available to the community residents through the merchants in a given commercial corridor.</li> </ul>
Branding & Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board or Marketing Committee should develop a marketing plan making use of a brand, a logo, and social media for advertising and as a method for communicating the purpose and benefit of the organization.</li> </ul>
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a website with a business directory, list of board members, contact information, map, news outlet, etc.</li> </ul>
Sustainability and Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a membership dues plan, approved by the board, and task someone with the responsibility of writing grants and securing additional funds from community sta</li> </ul>
TOOLS	<p>Social Media, Website, Bylaws, Incorporation, Marketing Plan, Meeting Minutes, Graphic Designers, Dues Structure</p>



# THE PROCESS OF FORMING A MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

## Measuring and Communicating Success

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build a membership and business database; track the number of active members and businesses on the commercial corridor</li> </ul>
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track whether the merchants association has attained or made progress towards its original goals</li> </ul>
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have sign in sheets that track participation and help create free mailing lists for promotions and news</li> </ul>
Website & Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track the number of followers and participants on various social media streams; use analytics to track the number of hits on organization's new website.</li> </ul>
Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track all press mentions and develop relationships with local media to assist in event promotion.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate the "impact" and above information (when appropriate) to members and prospective members</li> </ul>

**TOOLS**

Social Media, Sign in Sheets, Surveys, Excel, Websites, Google Alerts, Newsletters

