

## **Task Force A Meeting Summary Thursday, January 19, 2006**

Task Force Participants: Mitch Irwin – MI Department of Agriculture (chair), Jim Byrum – Michigan Agri-Business Association, Bob Craig – MI Department of Agriculture, Michael DiRamio – Food System Economic Partnership, Mike Hamm – Michigan State University, Jim Herbert – Neogen Corporation, Mattie Jordan-Woods – Northside Association for Community Development, Ron Moffett – MI Economic Development Corporation, Dan Reeves – Associated Food Dealers of Michigan, Todd Regis – United Food and Commercial Workers 951, Irma Zuckerberg – MI Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

Additional Participants: Susan Cocciarelli – Michigan State University, Kathy Fedder – MI Department of Agriculture, Antonio Mitchell – represented City of Kalamazoo in NACD store development, Ron Steiner – The Starting Block kitchen incubator.

The fourth Task Force A: Expanding Food-Related Businesses and Jobs meeting convened Thursday, January 19, 2006 from 10:00am – 12:00pm at Constitution Hall in Lansing. MDA Director and Council Chairperson Mitch Irwin chaired the meeting.

The meeting began with a review of the December 13, 2005 full Council meeting, and the revised format of the standing Task Force A recommendations, based on input received at the Council meeting. Recommendation A1: Information and Collaboration Opportunities was approved by the full Council, while Recommendation A2: Agricultural Processing Renaissance Zones will be presented to the Council at the February meeting.

A Task Force member pointed out that Recommendation A2 (to increase the number of APRZs) as originally written is now outdated, as there is currently discussion underway in the Michigan Senate's Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism to increase the number of APRZs in the state. Task Force participants agreed that MFPC staff should revise Recommendation A2 to reflect this information.

MFPC staff person, Kristin Brooks, introduced Council Member Mattie Jordan-Woods and Antonio Mitchell, who discussed how Ms. Jordan-Woods, members of her neighborhood in Kalamazoo and community organization, the Northside Association for Community Development, worked to develop a new supermarket in their underserved community. Mr. Mitchell was, at the time, a business development specialist with the City of Kalamazoo, and assisted with the project. Ms. Jordan-Woods and Mr. Mitchell outlined some of the challenges and opportunities that they faced in the completion of this project, as well as some of the resources available to similar projects. It took nearly

8 years and \$3.7 million in public and private funds to build the grocery store. The biggest challenge Ms. Jordan-Woods identified was difficulties with land acquisition.

The Task Force participants discussed Ms. Jordan-Woods' experience and outlined a policy recommendation. MFPC staff will take comments and suggestions from the meeting and develop a draft recommendation to address the development of supermarkets and fresh food retail outlets in underserved urban neighborhoods. The recommendation is written as:

**Recommendation A3: Increase the number of supermarkets and fresh food retail outlets that serve urban low-income populations.**

- a) Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) should identify five (5) communities in which to initiate pilot feasibility studies for urban grocery store development in underserved communities and financially support the studies with matching funds.
- b) Michigan Department of Human Services should work with the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth to pilot a minimum of one (1) project wherein food stamp dollars are deposited onto clients' Michigan Bridge Card (Electronic Benefits Transfer card) twice per month, rather than once at the beginning of the month to increase grocery store viability in low-income areas.

The full recommendation includes an explanation and implementation strategies and will be emailed to Task Force participants for feedback and further input.

A Task Force participant raised a question regarding new recommendations and their introduction to the Task Force and to the Council. The Task Force, and the full MFPC, are still addressing new recommendations topics, and Task Force participants ideas will continue to be introduced and discussed in future Task Force A meetings.

The next Task Force A meeting will focus on entrepreneurship in the agri-food industry with time to discuss additional proposed recommendations from Task Force participants. The March meeting has not yet been scheduled.