



May 6, 2009

Dear Business Owner:

The term 'buy local' is now pretty common, yet its not clear if the increased awareness of this phrase has translated into any meaningful bottom line impact to area businesses – particularly non-retail ones. With the obvious overshadowing of the current economy, the James Street Improvement District (JSID) is evaluating several strategies to drive business opportunities among and between neighbor businesses in the City's Northwest and Downtown.

Over the past few months, the JSID (www.jsidlancaster.org) has convened a small group of local business owners to discuss our own version of a B2B/Buy Local type initiative. To be clear, our primary target audiences are smaller non-retail businesses (i.e. fewer than 30 employees – particularly given the number of companies with fewer than five) whose revenues come from work with other business interests. From office supply companies and printers to engineering firms and marketing experts, nearly every good or service imaginable can be found within the District.

Importantly, it is clear that many business owners are not aware that many of their needs may be filled by a neighbor. We've learned that business owners across the street from each other haven't made connections – not surprising when juggling the demands of a small business. Also, we've learned about many misconceptions that exist about small and local business, such as the thinking that pricing can't be competitive with the large national chains. We've also heard about the strong commitment to customer service and relationship-building that local owners have when they can work with other area businesses.

We'd like to get broad feedback from businesses in the District about what business development opportunities may appeal to you as everyone looks at being even more creative in getting new customers and keeping existing ones. On the back side of this letter is a simple form that attempts to collect some basic information and identifies a few ideas we have about how to increase connectivity among the local, small business base. Please feel free to make any other suggestions too.

This letter is being sent to a very broad list of businesses based on a mailing list we received. Please forgive us if this letter does not apply to you. We erred on sending it out to as many contacts as possible instead of trying to self select who may be interested.

For those who return the information on the back (by fax, mail or online), we'll be back in touch hopefully within the next month or two as we take your guidance and develop some next steps.

Many thanks in advance for your ideas and information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Riggs".

Lisa Riggs
President

P.S. Feel free to e-mail me with any comments or ideas at lisariggs@jsidlancaster.org