Welcome to the
Thomas B. Hagen Fellowship Capstone Presentation
Mission

The mission of Our West Bayfront is to enhance the quality of life in the West Bayfront neighborhoods by promoting civic involvement, thoughtful development, historical preservation, and neighborhood pride.

History

Our West Bayfront is a neighborhood revitalization organization created in 2014 by interested residents and community partners throughout Erie’s West Bayfront neighborhoods.
The Thomas B. Hagen Fellowship Program is a unique experiential learning course for ERIE Employees interested in meaningful civic engagement in the communities where ERIE does business.

The Program offers a robust network opportunity coupled with educational sessions featuring government and business leaders who provide a comprehensive understanding of current programs and initiatives aimed at revitalization efforts in and around downtown Erie, PA. It also offers participants an extraordinary affiliation and project collaboration with a nonprofit community partner. Successful completion of the Program results in a cohort of Thomas B. Hagen Fellows who are well equipped to answer a Call to Action when asked.
Small Business Support Strategy

Commercial Capstone Project
Agenda

- OWB By the Numbers
- Problem Statement
- Expected Outcomes
- OWB's Role
- Our Approach
- Recommendations
- Closing
OWB By the Numbers

Called “Erie’s greatest residential asset” by city planners

- 12,000 +/- Residents
- 4,400 Buildings/Structures
- 31.5 miles of roadway
- Area: 843 acres
- 180 +/- Businesses
- 4 Public parks and gathering spaces

- Waterfront views and promenades
- Historic buildings
- Schools and campuses
- Proximity to Central Business district and Waterfront
- Easy access via Bayfront Connector to Route I-79
West Bayfront
Problem Statement

Background

The Our West Bayfront is home to approximately 180 small businesses in a variety of industries that contribute to the City’s economic activity. Covid-19 demonstrated that many of these businesses are not well-prepared or well-supported to weather a crisis.

OWB has not yet developed a business support strategy.

Goal

To outline an OWB small business support strategy that complements existing economic development efforts and reflects the diversity of existing and potential neighborhood small businesses.
Expected Outcomes

Provide actionable plan for OWB Small business strategy including:

1. Identify Supporting Programs for existing small businesses
2. Determine options to maintain on-going communications with small businesses
3. Develop marketing and financial recommendations to support and attract businesses
4. Outline of policy and regulatory requirements
5. Identify what type of businesses to attract to OWB, including vacant properties
Our West Bayfront can play an instrumental role for businesses in the neighborhoods that will promote a better environment for businesses, residents, and the Erie community overall.

**OWB Roles:**

- **Conduit**
  - Being a *conduit* to other supporting organizations and local resources and promote connections within the West Bayfront

- **Advocate**
  - Being an *advocate* for small businesses through different strategies to increase promotion of their products and services

- **Catalyst**
  - Being a *catalyst* to attract new and businesses needed in the community
The Commercial cohort identified 4 main tracks of work to understand current state, obtain and analyze feedback, research and provide recommendations to support small businesses in OWB.

1. OWB Background - Inventory of existing businesses and vacant spaces
2. Interviews with Small Businesses
4. Support Programs & Similar Cities Research

Communication Model:
- On-going conversations with OWB to ensure alignment with expected outcomes and understanding of other efforts underway
- Involvement of the business community to ensure recommendations made sense
Businesses in the West Bayfront

Examples of some existing businesses

- B&B
- Rolled ice cream

~10 Vacant commercial spaces identified in OWB

Ranked 708 of the nation’s fastest-growing private companies
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36 Small Businesses interviewed (in/out of OWB) + some Residents  ... Thank you for your Feedback!

Easter Group Daycare

Urban Oasis Project

Prinzi Window Treatments by Pam

Hairs 2 U

Sammy’s Food Mart & Deli

Bayfront Convenience Store

Tungsten
Our Approach

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Recommendations & Deliverables

Communication Model:
- On-going conversations with OWB to ensure alignment with expected outcomes and understanding of other efforts underway
- Involvement of the business community to ensure recommendations made sense
Thank You for your Feedback and Input!

Government Officials

Small Businesses
Supporting Organizations

Thomas B. Hagen Fellowship Program

OWB Staff
OWB Board
OWB Advisory Council
TBHF Steering Committee
TBHF Panel Participants
Community Development Corporations
Involvement of the Community

- Interviews
- Reviewed results of prior surveys
- Virtual Townhall with interviewed businesses

On-going conversations with OWB

- Alignment to Expected Outcomes
- Understanding of efforts underway
- Continuous Refinement of Recommendations
By focusing on actionable recommendations, OWB can provide substantial support to businesses.

**Summary of Actionable Recommendations**

**OWB Action:**

- **Conduit:** Business Support Guides
- **Advocate:** Marketing Strategies
- **Catalyst:** Business Attraction Strategies

6/21/2022
Challenge/Opportunity
What programs exist to support small businesses in Erie?

Recommendation
There is a vast array of business support and funding available in Erie. OWB can be the **conduit** between small businesses and those organizations to provide key information that they may not be able to obtain easily.

Developed the following resource guides as a starting point for OWB and small businesses:

- Small Business Support Guide
- Funding Resources Guide
- Resources for Minority-Owned Businesses
- Zoning and Permits Guide
- Government Resources Guide
How do we help businesses to learn from each other and stay connected?

**Challenge/Opportunity**

Businesses can learn a lot from each other and their shared experiences. OWB can be a **conduit** to promote connections among OWB and partnering with other relevant institutions to bring topics of interest.

**Recommendation**

Small Business Symposium

- Promotes Networking and knowledge sharing
- Awareness of programs supporting small businesses (e.g., SBDC, Erie Chamber, ETI)
- Educational Component / Keynote speaker

Small Business Facebook Group

- Networking
- Grow referral lists
- Ask feedback or recommendation about any topic
- Establish mentorship relationship
Challenge/Opportunity
How can we promote businesses in the West Bayfront?

Recommendation
OWB as an organization is uniquely situated to be an *advocate* for businesses through different marketing strategies to increase promotion of their products and services.

Marketing Strategies

- Business Spotlights
- Photo Contest on Social Media
- Attend Local Vendor Expos
- Local Media Campaign
- Restaurant Week
- Erie Food Tours
Challenge/Opportunity
How can we attract more businesses to the West Bayfront?

Recommendation
OWB can serve as a catalyst to attract businesses to the area by implementing various business attraction strategies and making strategic placemaking improvements.

Create Space for Pop-up businesses
Farmers Market
Retail

Support Small Business Incubators
Continue to support the AEH Incubator initiative underway

Support a Free or reduced Rent Program
Create contest for small businesses
Tailored to needs of the neighborhoods

Placemaking in the 8th Street Corridor
Implement 2-way traffic
New sidewalks
Building façade updates
Neighborhood beautification
Access to more parking
As graduates of the Thomas B. Hagen Fellowship Program, we too are called to be conduits, advocates, and catalysts to support various non-profits and other key initiatives in the Erie area.
Building Neighborhood Equity Project Team

Yiwen Dai
Next Level Innovation

Lisa Dippold
IT Talent Optimization Mgmt

Adam Groves
Learning & Development

Lisa Holman
Customer Care

Robert Moore
Corporate Claims

Karl Osinski
Sales & Agency Relations

Charles Spacht
Infrastructure Admin & Ops

Courtney Steding
Human Resources
Acknowledgements

Thank you!
Agenda

- Project Team Introduction
- The West Bayfront Trivia
- Project Problem Statement
- Research Approach
- Key Research Themes
- Recommendations
- Closing
As of the latest census, the West Bayfront population was:
12,015

The West Bayfront has this many city parks:
4 parks

The home ownership rate in the West Bayfront is:
28%

For a comparison, homeownership for the City of Erie is 51%
The national average is 64%

Among owner-occupied property transfers from 2019 – 2021, how many were built prior to 1922?
95%
Problem Statement

Background

- Home ownership rates: among the **lowest in the City of Erie, at 28%**
- Rate has **steadily declined**, especially among Black households
- Creates a **challenge for low- and middle-income households** who are missing out on an important path to building household wealth
- High percentage of rentals contributes to neighborhood challenges

Goal

- Increase **neighborhood longevity**
- Understand potential programmatic or policy responses at the neighborhood level
- Provide OWB with **actionable programmatic recommendations**
Research Approach

Interviews & Discussions
- Local realtors and relocation specialists
- Residents (renters and homeowners)
- Landlords

Secondary Research
- Property Transfers
- Eviction & Foreclosure data
- Home buyer education programs
- Use cases / success stories

Fellowship events = additional connections with subject matter experts
Research Approach

Data Collection

- Fellowship events
- Interviews
- Group discussions
- Secondary research

Themes and Takeaways

- SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
- Form recommendations by population
- Outline → build report

Recommendations

- West Bayfront Residents: current homeowners
- West Bayfront Residents: current renters
- The Erie Community at large

Frequent collaboration between project team and OWB throughout the process
Roles OWB plays in our recommendations:

- **Conduit**
- **Catalyst**
- **Advocate**

Research Themes

Representative Microcosm of Erie

Community-drive

Location, Location, Location

Reputation

“It’s Perfect!”

It’s Perfect!

Reputation drive Community
Research Approach

Research factors to highlight:

- Established communities in the West Bayfront neighborhoods: not the focus of this project
- Capstone presentation = highlights. Detailed report being given to OWB
- Recommendations have short-term and long-term opportunities
- Theme of CDC feedback: change does not occur over night
OWB’s Role

**Conduit**
- Home Improvement Resources
- Foreclosure Prevention & Support
- Homebuyer Education Resources
- Eviction Prevention & Support

**Catalyst**
- Employer Assisted Housing Programs
- Community Land Trust

**Advocate**
- Placemaking
- Communications Refresh
Strengths

- Pride & optimism among residents
- Strong sense of neighborhood identity
- Location (proximity to downtown, bayfront)
- Competitive rental price

Opportunities

- Property transfers: recent majority involve rental properties
- Age of homes
- Tax assessment
- Lower home ownership rates for Black residents
- Awareness of OWB
- Building credit or financial reserves
- High eviction rates and rental turnover
- Perceived issues with Erie City Schools
To support the needs of West Bayfront homeowners and renters, OWB should be a conduit to key information and resources that may not be accessible or easily obtainable for all.
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To increase homeownership and residential longevity in the West Bayfront, OWB should be a catalyst for expanding employer assisted housing programs in Erie.
To preserve affordability for low-to-middle income potential homeowners, OWB should be a catalyst to create a Community Land Trust in Erie.
To preserve affordability for low-to-middle income potential homeowners, OWB should be a catalyst to create a Community Land Trust in Erie.

A new resident buys their house outright...

...but leases the land underneath from the CLT.

They pay an annual fee to the CLT to support its operations...

...and the CLT retains permanent ownership of the land.
To enhance community pride, OWB should be an advocate for the West Bayfront community by implementing events and placemaking elements that strengthen its identity.

OWB track record of putting on great events

New events centered around community milestones and historical events

Continued desire of residents to meet, interact, and know their neighbors
To enhance community pride, OWB should be an advocate for the West Bayfront community by implementing events and placemaking elements that strengthen its identity.

Increase Signage

- Creates memorable, long-lasting impressions
- Fosters group identity and sense of belonging

Image source: ASI Signage Innovations, Effective Neighborhood Wayfinding Solution case study https://asisignage.com/
To strengthen its bond with residents, businesses, and the greater Erie community, OWB should continue to be an advocate that amplifies the voice of the West Bayfront community by investing in a refresh of its print and digital communications.
Thank you for attending the Thomas B. Hagen Fellowship Capstone Presentation.