A conversation with the Executive Director, September 2, 2014
by Dayton's Bluff District Forum staff

Last week, Dayton's Bluff District Council (DBCC) Executive Director Deanna Abbott-Foster, and Tong Thao, DBCC Board Secretary, along with members of the Hmong American Partnership and Frogtown Farms, joined a tour of local food production and urban farming in Milwaukee sponsored by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). This was a reciprocal visit with Milwaukeeans who visited the Twin Cities earlier in the summer to see what the East Side Healthy Food Initiative was accomplishing.

One of those efforts here on the East Side is Mobile Market, an initiative of the Wilder Foundation, which has outfitted an old Metro Transit bus to bring healthy, low-cost food to areas sometimes known as “food deserts.” This include parts of Dayton's Bluff, where weekly stops are being scheduled at First Lutheran Church and Parkway Gardens, with more being added. In fact, Dayton's Bluff will be the home base for the food bus, which will be parked at night inside the East Side Enterprise Center due to open next month.

A Mobile Market representative gave a presentation about the project to last week's DBCC board meeting and described the difficulty in family food shopping posed by medical issues, homelessness or a lack of adequate transportation. Read more in the Twin Cities Daily Planet article, “This city bus will soon be a mobile grocery store” and an article posted at the Mobile Market's Facebook page: “What I learned after taking a homeless mother grocery shopping.”

Another product of the work resulting from the formation of the East Side Enterprise Center is the DBCC Business Growth Fund. Deanna is working on a report to the McKnight Foundation detailing how their $250,000 will be used to complement the $500,000 City of St. Paul STAR grant/loan allocation to generate 25 to 50 living wage jobs on the East Side. In June the DBCC board named seven members to the Enterprise Center's Loan Committee, charging them with managing decisions for using both the STAR and McKnight funds. Members of the committee include:

- Chuck Repke, Northeast Neighborhood Development Corporation
- Sia Lo, Attorney at Law and Administrator of Dellwood Gardens
- Va-Megn Thoj, Executive Director, Asian Economic Development Association
• Steve Ledin, Attorney at Law, small business specialist and President, East Side Area Business Association
• Tammy Klinkhamer, Vice President, Sunrise Banks
• Alex Bajwa, Attorney at law, business owner, STAR Committee member and DBCC Treasurer
• Deanna Abbott-Foster, Executive Director, DBCC, Enterprise Center co-founder

The committee met in June to establish goals and procedures to be used in making decisions regarding the use of funds.

Finally, if you haven't yet had a chance to look at the new Dayton's Bluff Community Council website, please take a moment to do so. There's a contact form you can use to send us your comments and your feedback would be much appreciated.