EWU’s Business Resource Center serves as the business and community outreach component for the College of Business and Public Administration. It provides technical assistance, education, and research to individual businesses and community groups working on local economic development in the Spokane area. It is funded by the University, the Herbert B. Jones Foundation, and contracts with participating partners.

“The BRC’s mission is to generate, exchange, and apply knowledge to improve the economic vitality and quality of life in neighborhoods and communities in the region.”

Goals in carrying out this mission include:

- Provide technical assistance to increase the knowledge and capabilities of community-based firms and organizations.
- Conduct research that assists firms, organizations, and communities with improving sustainable business and economic development practice.
- Exercise a collaborative approach that responds to the complex, interrelated issues in distressed communities.
- Support the University and College’s goals of service learning and community engagement by promoting and expanding the capacity to provide needed education, research, service to address community issues in the region.

BRC MISSION AND GOALS

In December Wm. J. Kelley, BRC Director, and Kelly Keenan, SNBAP Coordinator, presented a progress report on Spokane neighborhoods to the City of Spokane Community Development Board (CD Board) members. Their presentation stressed the accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned from the project thus far. Board members were keenly interested in the success of the “one-on-one” approach and the role that “trust” plays in that success. The City’s CD department and HUD support the BRC special project of Spokane Neighborhood Business Assistance Project (SNBAP).

A few BRC clients: Selected Spokane Neighborhood Business Districts

Garland District

South Perry District

East Sprague District

West Broadway District

“Sustainable business practices lead businesses to a better work environment; a healthier, more productive workforce; more customers; and an increase in the bottom line.”

- City of Spokane, SMART Business Recognition Program

PRESENTATION TO THE CITY OF SPOKANE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

BRC NEWSLETTER

OVERVIEW OF 2008 BRC ACTIVITIES

The BRC had an active year in 2008. Some of the activities included:

- Initiated the Spokane Neighborhood Assistance Project that provides direct one-on-one assistance to businesses in the Garland, W. Broadway, and S. Perry Districts. This project is funded by the City’s Community Development Department (for other BRC activities, support is provided by the University and the Herbert B. Jones Foundation).
- Conducted over 400 business site visits and provided or coordinated responses to over 50 requests for research, information, and business assistance.
- Presented field research findings at 15 neighborhood business association meetings.
- Surveyed and compiled brief “first impression” findings on physical appearance of five neighborhood centers in Spokane.
- Conducted research on “green” business practice and consumer purchasing at three neighborhood summer street fairs (over 400 participants).
- Conducted research on e-commerce, sustainable “green” business practice, inventory loss prevention, and “trust” associated with the interaction between clients and service providers.
- Assisted City Task Force on Revitalization of East Sprague with requested inventory of Art and International Businesses in the Spokane Region. Results are being used for target recruitment and promotion.
- Assisted City of Spokane’s Sustainable Business Program with research on components of their SMART Program that provides recognition for sustainable business practices.
- Prepared two academic papers, with other College faculty, on small business needs and social entrepreneurship perspectives for ICJSB conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- Conducted research that assists firms, organizations, and communities with improving sustainable business and economic development practice.
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- Conducted research that assists firms, organizations, and communities with improving sustainable business and economic development practice.

ADDRESS

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GOOD BYE AND GOOD LUCK TO OUTGOING BRC STAFF

Dr. Robert Schwartz, EWU Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship and former Director of the CEA retired in June 2008. Dr. Schwartz continues to share his substantial expertise through volunteer work and private consulting.

Margie Hall, BURP with Honors, graduated in June 2008. She now directs City/County GETEC program that examines employer/employee incentives for reducing drive alone commuting.

Josh Hall, a SAFECO Fellow, graduated with a MURP in June 2008. He is now the economic development specialist with the State’s Community Trade and Economic Development Department.
BRC Project Coordinator, Kelly Keenan, is a first year graduate student in Eastern Washington University’s Masters of Urban and Regional Planning Program. After graduating from Gonzaga and working in Seattle for three years in affordable housing, Kelly moved back to Spokane to enter graduate school. Kelly now works as project coordinator for the Spokane Neighborhood Business Assistance Program, he meets frequently with small business owners and operators to assess business needs, provide technical assistance, and pair businesses with appropriate service providers.

BRC Research Assistant, Leon Letson, is a first year graduate student in Eastern Washington University’s Masters of Urban and Regional Planning Program. Most recently, Leon worked with the City of Spokane’s Environmental Program’s office, co-researching and writing Spokane’s first greenhouse gas inventory. Before that, he worked as an editor and journalist for a number of publications, including various business-related publications. His current assignment with the BRC includes research on trust and its role in business assistance. Leon is also researching best practices in “green” business opportunities.

BRC Research Assistant, Dinah Reed, is a first year graduate student in Eastern Washington University’s Masters of Urban and Regional Planning Program. Dinah worked as an administrative assistant in Chicago for several years for a variety of businesses including a publishing company, a high-profile real estate developer and a Saudi Arabian gallery of traditional material culture. She moved to Spokane nine years ago where she worked in the same capacity for a Program and Construction Management consulting firm before going back to school full-time. Her work for BRC includes research on sustainable neighborhood and business models, inventoring arts and international businesses in Spokane and coordinating and editing the newsletter and website.

BRC INTRODUCES NEW STAFF FOR 2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR

WASHINGTON APA STATE CONFERENCE HELD IN SPOKANE

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SUMMER STREET FAIR LISTENING POSTS: ASSESSING “GREEN BUSINESS” POTENTIAL

BWU’s BRC is charged with assisting neighborhood business districts around the City with research and technical assistance. Given the current interest (national and local – e.g. Mayor’s Task Force) on sustainability, BRC thought it would be useful to explore community values and perspectives about sustainable business practice, shopping choices, and neighborhoods. Neighborhood street fairs held in the S. Perry, E. Sprague (Keystone) and Garland St. districts last summer offered an opportunity to engage participants through the participatory tool of “listening posts”. This technique offers an unobtrusive method for conducting surveys to willing participants to gain their viewpoints and preferences.

At each street fair, the BRC hosted a tent with large graphic posters that were colorful and visible from a distance and acted as a visual way to attract people to participate in the survey. The boards contained header questions such as: Smart Shopping: What influences you?; Sustainable Business: What does it mean to you?; and Green Neighborhood: What does it mean to you? To engage small children, poster boards with choices about their favorite mode of travel for shopping, were also included. Over 400 adults participated in the three street fair surveys and survey results identified that most participants were aware of “green” and/or sustainable neighborhood and business practices and were committed to lifestyle choices such as using multi-modal transportation, shopping locally, buying food at farmer’s markets as well as creating more urban gardening in their neighborhoods.

Tabulated results and written report summaries will be used as a tool for the business districts to better understand the needs of their customers living in adjacent neighborhoods.

PROPOSED BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER ACTIVITIES for 2009

- Research on e-commerce for small businesses
- Continued research on “trust” and implications for our work with micro enterprises
- Developing an interview protocol, including trust variables, for SNBAP clients
- Revised BRC brochure, website, and periodic newsletters
- Updated market analysis for neighborhood business districts
- Develop useful brochures (e commerce, security-theft protection, market trends) for business clients
- Continued research on sustainable and “green” business practice for micro-enterprise
- Assisting neighborhood business clients to participate in City of Spokane’s SMART program
- Assisting neighborhood districts with evaluation/implementation of sustainable funding options for their organization
- Participating with other partners in the targeted revitalization efforts of E. Sprague
- Preparation of grant requests to continue and expand BRC activities