



## 2010-2011 ANNUAL REPORT

After a year of significant change, Venture Portland (formerly the Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations or APNBA) began FY 2010-2011 with a new strategic focus. The organization's leadership, including an energized membership, newly elected Executive Committee, and recently hired professional staff effectively implemented an aggressive work plan focused on strengthening Venture Portland's capacity, business district capacity and growth, and promotion that resulted in major successes for Portland's neighborhood business districts. The following report outlines Venture Portland's FY 2010-2011 accomplishments.

### **Strengthen Venture Portland Capacity**

Venture Portland emerged in 2010 after a comprehensive reorganization as a stronger, more focused and connected organization. As a result, significant positive results were achieved as noted below.

#### Membership

After increasing membership 50% in FY 2009-2010, Venture Portland retained 97% of 2010 members and increased membership 10% over the prior year. Based on their own significant membership and revenue growth, 15% of Venture Portland's business district members increased a membership level (moving from small to medium or medium to large). As a result, Venture Portland's membership revenue increased 75% over 2010.

#### Governance

In April, after celebrating 25 years supporting Portland's neighborhood business districts, Venture Portland's membership elected the largest Board in the organization's history, bringing 32 business district leaders together from across the City. Committee membership doubled, diversifying Venture Portland's leadership and significantly increasing Board engagement. Venture Portland's dedicated leaders came together for 63 Board and Committee

meetings (slightly more than 5 per month); contributing 1,244 volunteer hours to build organizational and business district capacity and market and promote business districts. These volunteer hours, equal to .6 FTE or 24 hours/week, are in addition to each Board members' work in their own business and business district. Finally, after completing a governance audit, the Board approved new bylaws, creating a legally appropriate model for business district governance.

### Finances

After implementing new internal controls and generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), Venture Portland successfully completed its first external financial review, objectively confirming that business district dues and the City's funds were well-managed and modeling GAAP best practices for business districts. The organization also changed its fiscal year to 7/1-6/30 bringing accounting in-line with programming for the first time.

### Staffing

Venture Portland hired a new Executive Director with significant management and business district experience through a national search. Additional personnel changes included a new Operations Manager, Marketing Manager, bookkeeper, CPA, IT administrator, and corporate attorney. Using feedback gathered while visiting each business district, staff created a work plan based on business district needs. This plan outlined goals with specific measurable outcomes and served as a roadmap to build organizational and business district capacity.

### Office/Operations

At the end of 2010 Venture Portland moved to a more central office with transit-friendly meeting space. Critical technology upgrades and infrastructure improvements helped Venture Portland increase operations efficiency allowing the organization to focus on building business district capacity.

### **Build Business District Capacity**

Working closely with our partners to align and coordinate resources, Venture Portland launched a new series of capacity building programs including significant training and technical assistance for business district leaders. Representatives from 37 business districts participated in at least one of Venture Portland's capacity building programs. By addressing all aspects of

business district operations from insurance coverage to membership growth, Venture Portland strengthened business districts citywide as noted below.

### Best Practices

Recognizing the wealth of expertise in Portland's business districts, Venture Portland formalized the sharing of best practices to align and coordinate resources with bi-annual event debriefs and a new 'mentoring connections' program linking leaders from 21 business districts to discuss best practices around staffing, membership, banners, flower baskets, websites, bylaws, and association revitalization. Venture Portland brought together leaders from the City's four industrial districts to discuss shared issues and future collaboration. And, Venture Portland launched a bi-monthly Business District Staffer lunch to share resources and build collective staffing skills.

### Training and Technical Assistance

In partnership with PDC, Venture Portland implemented a capacity building training series designed to align and coordinate resources that covered everything from local to national best practices. After providing a broad training on best practices from the national Main Street program, Venture Portland offered two multi-part trainings on growing membership and raising money. Since 11/1/10, Venture Portland provided 675 training hours and an additional 189.5 hours of one-on-one technical assistance to business district leaders.

### Insurance Coverage

In the face of an insurance crisis, Venture Portland provided critical liability coverage to ensure annual events that drive business district growth occurred throughout 2010. In 2011 Venture Portland provided a citywide subsidy that helped 12% of business districts invest in general liability insurance for the very first time.

### **Promote and Market Business Districts**

To increase Portlander's understanding of the value of business districts to the City's economy, Venture Portland professionalized its communications and created partnerships with key opinion leaders and stakeholders. As a result, significant positive results were achieved as noted below.

### Branding

Venture Portland used its second annual strategy summit to kick off a branding process that would deliver a new name, visual identity, collateral, and branding case study for distribution to business districts. After soliciting feedback from key stakeholders and partners, Venture Portland's Board unanimously approved a new name, expected to be publicly announced in August.

### Electronic Communication/Website

For the first time, Venture Portland coordinated content on apnba.com and .org, ensuring a consistent organization voice on the web. Management of the website and newsletter were brought in-house, saving significant funds and ensuring timely content updates. Staff launched a new internal monthly newsletter, 'Venture Portland at Work', to highlight meetings, membership benefits, and critical organizational information that increased communication with business district delegates, presidents, and staff.

### Partnerships

Venture Portland systematically worked to build relationships with key stakeholders including ONI, PDC, Neighborhood Notes, Portland Business Alliance, SBAC, and Travel Portland to align and coordinate resources. After working with ONI's leadership, Venture Portland met with the Neighborhood Directors and co-sponsored the Neighborhood Leaders Dialogue. Venture Portland's Executive Director was elected to the SBAC Board and joined PBA's Small Business Council. Working closely with both PBA and SBAC, Venture Portland co-hosted several leadership events including "City Business: Making Sense of Portland's Bureaus, Budgets, and Business Support Organizations" attended by 71 business owners. To ensure the business perspective was included in the final draft of the Portland Plan, Venture Portland co-sponsored a Portland Plan Business Forum with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. Finally, Venture Portland worked closely with PDC to publicize trainings and ensure Council support for the NED Strategy.

### **Implement Bi-Annual Grants Program**

Venture Portland awarded \$79,994 to fund 39 projects in 24 business districts, leveraging an additional \$146,278 in private investment. These grants funded 29 first-time or significantly expanded events. In addition, Venture Portland secured 100% response rate for FY 09-10 and FY 10-11 grant evaluations.

**Conclusion**

Venture Portland ended FY 10-11 a very different organization than when the year began. Strategic efforts to build organizational and business district capacity resulted in significant, sustained growth. Critical partnerships with key opinion leaders and stakeholders resulted in increased recognition for the value of Venture Portland and the City's business districts to Portland's economy. Finally, diverse new leaders emerged to guide Venture Portland through its next 25 years.

Venture Portland begins FY 11-12 with a clear focus on neighborhood economic development and the infrastructure, programs, and leadership to successfully continue its partnership with the City of Portland.