



Warren Morgan, Fifth Third Bank, Derrick Blackmon, Osborn Business Association, Alice Thompson, Black Family Development, Inc.

Osborn Business Association brings area business and neighbors together to revitalize community

Conventional wisdom tells some people in Detroit not to expect too much from a grassroots community meeting. These are the people who suspect that a standing room only crowd at a community event is synonymous with unicorn-spotting in northeast Detroit.

But, on March 26th Fifth Third Bank held the Osborn Business Association's Meet and Greet at its Gratiot Financial Center in Detroit. And, it was standing room only. In fact, far more than a meet and greet, it was an evening filled with information sharing, connecting with neighbors and a celebration of community.

The crowd represented a wide range of community interests and included business owners, area residents, students, staff from the three Osborn High Schools and the Brenda Scott Middle School. The meeting also included a lively panel discussion that addressed concerns of residents and students and informed the guests of upcoming initiatives for the area.

The evening's featured speaker was Alice Thompson, CEO of Black Family Development, Inc., followed by a panel discussion that was moderated by Rachel R. Williams, LMSW, associate program manager of the University of Michigan's School of Social Work. The panel represented leadership from the Black Family Development, the Osborn Business Association, and the Detroit Future City Initiative.

The discussion focused squarely on economic de-



Guests at the OBA meeting applauds panel.

velopment in the Osborn area and while the core of the subject matter was economics in general, one strain of the conversation that was continually revisited was the crucial topic of opportunities for neighborhood youth.

Questions, particularly from the students, were assertive, straightforward and focused on what assistance they could expect from the businesses represented in the room.

The students were Osborn High School DECA Club members. They asked for guidance and support from the businesses that were present in learning ways to improve operations at their school store to increase their sales. They were not shy. All-in-all, they were a pretty impressive group of teens.

When questioned about the success of neighborhoods such as Midtown or Downtown and how the Association might bridge the economic gap in Osborn in order to tell a similar success story, the crowd was reminded by Thompson that compar-

ing the areas is comparing "apples to oranges."

She stressed the unique differences between the areas and noted that while each are neither better nor worse, their individual needs are as unique as the neighborhoods themselves.

"There is a future in Osborn. Looking down the road a bit, not just a year or two but 10, 20 or more, Osborn will continue to evolve as land use in the city becomes smarter and more efficient. Land use is being reevaluated and areas will be adapted to meet the changing needs of the city and its changing population size," Bomani Gray of Future City Detroit Project said.

Osborn is one of six neighborhoods in the city of Detroit that are a part of the Skillman Foundation's Good Neighborhoods program.