

Retail Workshop Is a Success

By **EMILY MOSS** | APRIL 8, 2015

“Retailers are the heart and soul of the community,” said Laura Stefanescu of Northern Bank whose opening remarks set the tone for an informative and motivational evening at the recent Best Retail Practices Workshop.

On March 25 at Bedford’s Cucina D restaurant (54 Middlesex Tpke), the Middlesex 3 Coalition hosted the first of three free retail workshops for small businesses. The Coalition’s goal is to foster economic development by building a mutually beneficial network of the local governments, real estate developers and businesses in nine Middlesex County communities. The Town of Bedford’s Economic Development Coordinator, Alyssa Sandoval, and the Bedford Chamber of Commerce worked with the Middlesex 3 Coalition to host the workshop in Bedford and reach out to Bedford retailers and restaurants. Recognizing the value of small businesses’ contributions to the economy, the Coalition’s workshop series serves to support retailers and provide them with strategies for how they can best present their product to customers.



Presentation to local businesses
(photo image: Maureen Sullivan)



Stephanie Cronin, Middlesex 3 Coalition Executive Director, welcomes audience
(photo image: Alyssa Sandoval)

The evening began with time for attendees to socialize and network with one another, in addition to their respective chamber of commerce or town government representative. A variety of retail stores from Bedford participated from a pet supply store to a framing shop, as well as a diverse group of businesses from other towns, including the Burlington Chamber of Commerce.

The workshop’s main event was a presentation by Christine Moynihan from Retail Visioning, a consulting service that advises small businesses on store design and retail marketing. The focus was identity – understanding one’s brand and its presence in the

community. This concept was broken down into various aspects of retail ownership, including store presentation (external facade, window displays, signage and interior layout), publicity and marketing (customer outreach, sale promotions, web design and social media integration) and managing finances. When brand identity is applied with consistency and intention, even small changes can make a big impact on a business' success.

According to Moynihan, "When asked where to shop, 70% of consumers say they'd choose to shop local." She further noted that shopping locally keeps 67 cents per dollar within the local economy. Community economic development results in not only more jobs, but also more vibrant streets. Much of my work as the economic development intern for the Town of Bedford has focused on providing clarity on local government procedures to assist businesses through the municipal process as part of a broader effort to bridge the gap between town government and the public. In performing company outreach, I've witnessed first-hand how complexities of business ownership and necessary municipal procedures can be difficult to navigate. For me, the workshop confirmed the potential that the interconnectedness between small businesses and their local government holds – therefore, encouraging small businesses to take advantage of such collaboration is vital.

The importance of supporting small businesses is clear, and the Best Retail Practices workshop series demonstrates that when retailers are equipped with the right skills and knowledge, both their individual venture and their community at-large can thrive.

The second workshop in the series was held on April 8 at the 110 Grill in Chelmsford. The third and final workshop will be held on April 21 at Princeton Properties, 500 Princeton Way in Westford. The workshops are free and open to Bedford businesses or prospective businesses. To register or for more information, contact info@middlesex3.com. [Click here for details.](#)

Emily Moss is the economic development intern for the Town of Bedford's Economic Development office. She will be working with City Councilor At-Large Michelle Wu in Boston this summer and entering Wellesley College in the fall.