



**News from
Mayor Ron Dellums**

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In First Quarter, Business Assistance Center Assists nearly 600 Entrepreneurs Offer Firsthand Account of BAC Assistance

OAKLAND, Calif. (October 14, 2009) – Mayor Ronald V. Dellums and City Council President Jane Brunner were joined today by members of the business community and representatives from the business service organizations to mark the grand opening of the Oakland Business Assistance Center (BAC). In the first three months since launching on July 1, 2009, the BAC has assisted 578 business owners and entrepreneurs with information, referrals, guidance and face-to-face case management to help businesses thrive in the East Bay’s business capital. BAC assistance is available to help businesses thrive in Oakland regardless of business sizes or industry sector.

“As we nurture business growth in Oakland, we’re creating job opportunities for all Oakland residents,” said Mayor Dellums. “In today’s tough economic times, business owners need to know they can call upon Oakland’s Business Assistance Center for help.”

“We are putting out the welcome mat for businesses to come to Oakland – we hold their hand through the permit process, help them to get a loan, and find them their ideal site. We want to make Oakland an easy choice and the best choice for doing business,” said Council President Brunner, one of the early backers of the Assistance Center, and a key player in realizing the vision of a “one-stop-shop.”

The first-ever, one-stop resource center for business owners, the BAC is a central source of information for starting, relocating or expanding a business in Oakland. The experienced professionals that staff the center have expert knowledge of the business support services offered by the City of Oakland and its nonprofit partners.

The concept for the BAC emerged through the work of the Small Business Task Force, one of the community task forces initiated by Mayor Dellums. Business owners have consistently vocalized that a small business assistance center was a top priority. Council President Brunner championed the idea and worked with the business community and city staff to make the BAC a reality.

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To better identify issues and tailor assistance, the BAC encourages clients to use the simple, online assessment form accessible from the BAC's website, www.OaklandBAC.com. In addition to the 10-question assessment form, the website provides a virtual online assistance center accessible 24 hours a day. A public/private partnership between the City of Oakland and OneCalifornia Foundation, the website is packed with how-to information and links to local business service organizations and city, state and federal agencies. The website has been visited more than 1,100 times by 521 unique users.

Of the 578 business owners and entrepreneurs assisted, 44 percent first interacted with the center by visiting the offices at 270 Frank Ogawa Plaza, 23 percent called on the telephone, 14 percent used the online assessment form, 13 percent were referred by other City staff and six percent reached the BAC in some other manner.

One of the primary ways BAC staff has assisted entrepreneurs and business owners is case management services and guidance through complex issues within City government such as zoning variances, permits and business license processes.

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