

## OBID Interviews Mayor Ravenstahl



Mayor Luke Ravenstahl

**Public Safety, parking, and panhandling are major concerns among business owners in Oakland. Does the city have any specific plans to combat these issues?**

The problems that challenge Oakland are not unlike the problems that neighborhoods across our City currently face. We have made enormous strides to ensure that our citizens and their property are safe from crime. In fact, 2007 has been the safest year for our citizens in more than 40 years. We have more police on the street and they are working with better technology than ever before. We once again have beat cops and patrols where we need them most. This means that they are in Oakland, walking the business district and patrolling the side streets.

Another safety measure for our communities is my Disruptive Property Legislation. My legislation contains enforceable measures for violations including: drugs, weapons, public drunkenness and excessive noise. Also included are maintenance violations, such as overgrowth or refuse accumulation. The legislation gives the city the power to shut down these nuisance properties by demanding that owners either create a plan to abate the issues, or be deemed to be a public nuisance. Once a property is deemed a public nuisance, activities there fall under the provisions of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code. I believe that this legislation will help eliminate the nuisance properties in the Oakland Community, while also encouraging landlords to be more mindful of their tenants' behavior.

Parking is also a major issue throughout the city. In addition to having cleared the entire



**Oakland Roundtable**  
for all OBID members

**Thursday, February 21**  
3:00 p.m.  
Peter's Pub, 2nd Floor  
116 Oakland Avenue

Topic:

**Panhandling: What Businesses Need to Know.** This Roundtable will focus on the laws and regulations regarding panhandlers, as well as the rights of business owners.

OBID's Roundtable information and discussion sessions are on the **third Thursday of every month at 3:00 p.m.!**

backlog of abandoned vehicles throughout the City since Fall 2007, we are currently working with the Pittsburgh Parking Authority to find ways to expand the Residential Permit Parking Program. We want to make living and working in our neighborhoods easy and enjoyable for the residents.

**With technology, healthcare, and education comprising an increasingly large proportion of Pittsburgh's economy, how do you see Oakland as a catalyst for the growth of Pittsburgh's economy?**

I am focused on putting programs in place that enable us to retain the talented people that are making technological and medical advancements in Oakland. We have broken ground on additional wet-lab space so that research born in Oakland can continue in Pittsburgh. As I mentioned before, we are focused on improving connections to Oakland, so that not only people, but also ideas, can flow from one neighborhood business hub to another.

We have also engaged professionals from the institutional and technology sectors in the Mayor's Economic Development Panel – comprised of 30 professionals from the educational, real-estate and business communities – to advise my office on business-friendly strategies and programs.

**In what ways could the smaller businesses in Oakland capitalize on growth in the technology, health care and education sectors?**

As growth happens in technology, health care and education, that expansion brings with it numerous new employees and the need for

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- **OBID Businesses, Get Ready to Recycle:** The City Department of Public Works is starting a campaign to enforce the city's recycling laws which fall under City Code 619. The city will be sending compliance verification forms to businesses within the city and businesses that are noncompliant will be given information on how to start a recycling program. Fines for noncompliance can range from \$300 -- \$5,000. Businesses will be expected to recycling paper, plastic bottles, and aluminum cans.

- **Save the Date:** There will be two community workshops on Wednesday, February 27 to discuss the Mon Valley Corridors Study. This study deals with the future of the Mon Fayette Express Way and its potential impact on the Oakland Community. The first meeting for employees and business will be from 4:00 pm–5:30 pm. The second meeting for Oakland residents will be from 6:00 pm–7:30 pm. Both meetings will be taking place at Community Human Services Corporation, 374 Lawn Street.



## Councilman Kraus Focuses on Clean and Safe Neighborhoods

"I want people to know that we're here, we're open, and we want to help." These are the words of Pittsburgh City Councilman, Bruce Kraus, during his first week in office as the representative from District 3. Kraus, who was sworn in on Monday, January 7, is a life time Southside resident with a long history of community involvement including former president of the Southside Chamber of Commerce. Councilman Kraus is also a very experienced entrepreneur, having owned an interior design business.

As chair of City Council's Public Safety Committee, Councilman Kraus hopes to make Pittsburgh a safer place. "I can't think of any better solution to generate revenue," said Kraus, "than to have Pittsburgh as the safest city in America."

The uniqueness of neighborhoods like Oakland are another asset that can generate revenue for the city. "One of the best qualities of the Oakland and Southside neighborhoods is their diversity," commented Kraus. "Oakland and Southside are like a cross between New York and Washington D.C. You have the unique businesses and shops of New York along with the diversity of D.C."

Along with planning to increase Pittsburgh's reputation as a safe city, Councilman Kraus wants to improve the image of Pittsburgh as being a clean and beautiful city. "There are no quick fixes. We need to find long term solutions," said Kraus about litter, graffiti, and building code violations. As part of former Mayor Tom Murphy's Graffiti Task Force, Councilman Kraus actively fought against the spread of graffiti in Pittsburgh neighborhoods. "(Graffiti) is such a cancer on the city," Kraus said. "It has only gotten worse."



**Bruce Kraus, Oakland's new Councilman**

In addition to fighting graffiti, Councilman Kraus also plans to improve the litter problem in Pittsburgh neighborhoods. "It's a much bigger issue than how to pick up trash," remarked Kraus. "I walk through Oakland and the streets are clean, and there are trash cans on the sidewalks. The OBID really makes a difference in the Oakland neighborhood."

Councilman Kraus also expressed a wish for increased utilization of the recycling aspect to the litter problem, "I am suggesting that we please complete the cycle. Dispose of this properly. Our society manufactures trash," said Kraus. He expressed an interest in finding ways to reduce our garbage output, starting with increased recycling. The OBID can expect to benefit from our councilman's initiatives that focus on neighborhood appearance and safety.

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expanded services, such as printing, supplies, and messenger services; personal services, such as insurance, dry cleaners, and dentists; and retail services, such as restaurants, convenience stores, and specialty goods.

Oakland small businesses can capitalize on this growth by understanding the needs in their evolving market place, and changing their business and marketing plans to grow their businesses accordingly.

To help our small businesses grow, I have charged the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) with aggressively marketing their financing tools and business programs. For example, the Greater Oakland Keystone Innovation Zone program can help start up and 'young' technology businesses connect with the University systems in

Oakland. The URA also offers gap-financing focused on assisting small business development and expansion. Loan officers in the Business Development Center in the URA will work with businesses one-on-one to determine the right tool for their needs.

The BDC staff, through partnerships with commercial lending institutions, can craft a financing package that puts businesses goals in motion. If a project is not yet ready for financing, BDC Loan Officers can match businesses with technical assistance providers that will assist business growth such as, how to craft a business or marketing plan; business cost/revenue analysis; and site location.

I have encouraged the URA to aggressively market programs that can help small businesses.



## BIZ-Bits

### OBID's 2007 Awardees:

OBID thanks our marketing committee who made 2007 a successful year!!!

- **Andrea Sobel** - National City Bank
- **Mike Abriola** - Eureka Bank
- **Amanda Charpentier** - STA Travel
- **Andy Hardie** - Dave and Andy's Ice Cream
- **Jennifer Layman** - Carnegie Mellon University
- **Ron Levick** - Strand Building
- **Laura Ludwig** - OPDC
- **Michael Messina** - Three Rivers Fitness
- **Melissa McMasters** - Pgh. Parks Conservancy
- **Alex Coyne** - OBID
- **Melanie Spigelmeyer** - OBID
- **Liz Nahm** - OTMA
- **Chris Oberdorf** - Pgh. Celebrates Glass
- **Bernie Parrish** - Touch of Gold and Silver
- **Josh Schriftman** - University of Pittsburgh
- **Florence Shwartz** - Oakland Real Estate
- **Louise C. Sciannameo** - Carlow University
- **Rosemarie Slezak** - University of Pittsburgh
- **Steve Zupcic** - University of Pittsburgh
- **Barry Zwibel** - Sir Speedy Printing



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