

Proposal for Support for Knowledge Sharing Trip: Touring American Underground for Potential Replication in St. Petersburg



Introduction & Background

In October 2016, the St. Petersburg Area Chamber organized a contingent of business leaders to tour Durham, North Carolina, as a peer learning experience designed to learn about Durham's strategies for economic growth and equity.

Pastor Louis Murphy was among the contingent. He has since enthusiastically shared information about the **American Underground**, a business incubator that - in 2015 - pledged to become the world's most diverse entrepreneurial hub. Within one year, it increased its share of female and minority-led firms by 30%. Today, 75 of its 257 firms are female-led and 73 are minority-led.

A group of South St. Petersburg community leaders has set sights on replicating the American Underground as one of **10 Big Ideas** to Transform the Economy of South St. Petersburg, an area identified by officials as the largest poverty concentration in Pinellas County, Florida.

The **10 Big** are a focal point of the emerging One Community Plan, which will be unveiled in April 2019 as a 10-year comprehensive economic growth plan for South St. Pete, a 25-square mile area that is home to nearly 80% of the city's African American population.

The Planning Leader Committee of the One Community Plan is now raising resources to support a contingent of South St. Pete business and community leaders for a "knowledge sharing" trip to Durham, for a more in-depth look and discussion about the **American Underground**.

The One Community Planning Leader Committee is staffed by six organizations: Pinellas County Urban League, Collective Empowerment Group of the Tampa Bay Area, the 2020 Plan, the New Deal team, Mt Zion Progressive Missionary Baptist, and Pinellas Ex-Offender Re-Entry Coalition.

About the Travelers

A group of up to 30 members of the One Community Plan Development Committee (PDC) and Emerging Leaders will make the trek. The PDC is comprised of 25 people who are leading economic growth initiatives for South St. Pete, including programs and initiatives in commercial revitalization, affordable housing and home ownership, employment and income growth, self-employment and business growth, and financial empowerment and wealth building. The Emerging Leaders are up-and-coming, "under 40" civic leaders and entrepreneurs being trained to help lead community advancement projects in future.

➤ For many travelers, this will be their first business trip and knowledge sharing experience, in addition to their first engagement in an initiative of the scale of the One Community Plan. Two of the young men below (John Muhammad and Jabaar Edmonds) are helping engage the youth voice in One Community.



Structured Learning

The trip will continue the **city-to-city exchange** that has unfolded over the past 18 months. Following the St. Petersburg Chamber trip to Durham in October 2016, a local analyst created a brief titled "Comparing the Economic Status of African Americans in Durham and St. Petersburg."

The two cities also shared a spotlight in July 2017 when the National League of Cities selected Durham and St. Petersburg to introduce their poverty-reduction plans with peers nationwide.

South St. Pete community leaders have engaged **Durham-based partners** to help structure the learning experience, including **two workshops** to learn steps taken to launch the Underground and how it fits within Durham's economic equity plans. Local partners include the Durham Chamber, City of Durham, the Visitors & Conventions Bureau, and American Underground staff.

Trip Itinerary (June 21-23, 2018)

June 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.5-hour Networking Dinner with presentation of Durham's economic equity strategies by discussants from Durham Chamber and Underground
June 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continental Breakfast Tour of Underground and sites that are part of economic equity strategies 2-hour Lunch & Learn with talk(s) by Durham City and Chamber leaders
June 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel home to St. Petersburg

Goal of this Experience

This experience will contribute powerfully to the vision of accelerating economic (employment and income) growth in South St Pete in the years ahead. The goal of the trip is to broaden the horizons and expand the visions of South St. Pete business and community leaders, about strategies being deployed elsewhere in America for to accelerate economic growth and equity for African American and other minority communities.

Targeted outcomes include:

- Up to 30 community leaders enjoying the fellowship of a trip to a city with a storied history of black economic progress (while still battling stubborn generational poverty)
- Increased confidence that a similar facility can be created in St. Petersburg
- Increased knowledge about the strategies, funding and actions taken to start and sustain the American Underground
- Expanded aspirations about the possibilities for innovation here in St. Petersburg

Pre- and post-trip surveys will gauge the trip's impact in enhancing the knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations (KASA) of the traveling group.

Investment Needed

The organizing team is asking partners to chip in with contributions of any size to raise the \$13,500 still needed to cover the nearly \$21,000 venture.

	Total	Gifts
Airfare (18 individuals)	8,960	3,840
Airport & Local Travel	1,500	1,500
Hotel (18 rooms)	7,600	
Meals (18 individuals)	1,912	1,912
Miscellaneous	750	
TOTALS:	\$20,722	\$7,252

How to Contribute

Checks by Mail or Drop-Off:

Payable to Pinellas County Urban League
333 31st Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33713
IN MEMO LINE: "For American Underground Trip"

Debit or Credit Card Contributions:

Go to: www.pcul.org and click on the RED "DONATE" in the nav bar or [Click here for direct link to the contribution page.](#)

Learn More:

<https://OneCommunityStPete.com>
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