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— FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE —

ProsperUS Detroit and MCR partnership benefits emerging entrepreneurs

Detroit, March 13, 2014 -- A new partnership will help aspiring entrepreneurs in Detroit address one of their biggest challenges: Securing adequate commercial space in the neighborhoods where they want to establish their new business.

Michigan Community Resources (MCR) is partnering with ProsperUS Detroit to provide valuable information, resources and workshops to help individuals served by the program. ProsperUS is an entrepreneurial training and micro-lending program for Detroit residents, particularly those from immigrant and minority communities. The program is lead by Southwest Solutions and involves collaboration with strong community-based organizations that host the training.

“Our entrepreneurs have great ideas and energy, but as they work on the business plans, they face numerous challenges completing the necessary research about available commercial space and target markets at the neighborhood level,” said Kimberly Faison, executive director of ProsperUS Detroit. “These challenges cannot be overcome without very specific information and guidance, and that is why the partnership with MCR is so important to help our entrepreneurs achieve success.”

Through the MCR partnership, ProsperUS entrepreneurs and community partners will have access to:

- Data, maps and tools on commercial property ownership, key properties to target for redevelopment and business types for available commercial space on key thoroughfares in the target neighborhoods. (This information will become toolkits that help organizations to reactivate once blighted commercial properties.)
- Financial fitness workshops and legal technical assistance workshops regarding incorporation, employment law, intellectual property and real estate basics.
- Resident engagement strategies so that businesses better understand residents’ retail needs and wants, residents feel empowered by supporting and growing small neighborhood-based businesses.
- Workshops about how community development corporations (CDCs) can better support neighborhood businesses and how business can better take advantage of supports from CDCs.

“MCR is excited to be a part of this project because we believe small business entrepreneurship is essential to the revitalization of low-income neighborhoods,” said Jill Ferrari, CEO of MCR, which provides a broad range of skills and supports to organizations serving distressed communities. “To be able to use our legal and planning resources toward this goal just helps us further our mission.”

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These resources will allow entrepreneurs to accurately determine:

- Ownership of a prospective commercial space
- Cost to address code deficiencies
- Zoning regulations
- Most appropriate spaces by business type
- Market research about neighborhood demand for goods and services
- Safety concerns and other issues that might impact the business

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