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Contacts: Diane Holtaway, Rutgers, holtaway@njaes.rutgers.edu, 856-459-1900, x4514
Cristina Deutsch, PRC, cdeutsch@patersonnj.gov, 201-543-4085

Rutgers Food Innovation Center to Lead Feasibility Study with City of Paterson to Create Food Business Incubation Program

Informational meetings for food entrepreneurs and businesses planned for Feb. 23

PATERSON, NJ–The Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC) has been awarded a contract from the Paterson Restoration Corporation (PRC) to lead a feasibility study on creating a food business incubation program in Paterson, NJ. The grant to Rutgers was for $70,000, with funding to the PRC by the US Economic Development Administration.

The PRC and FIC will hold informational meetings on Feb. 23 for startup entrepreneurs and established food businesses, in order to gather community input into the planning process at the Hamilton Club of Passaic County Community College, located at 32 Church Street, Paterson.

“We are very excited to have been given the opportunity to assist the City of Paterson in moving forward with this project,” said Lou Cooperhouse, Director of the Rutgers Food Innovation Center. “There is tremendous consumer demand in the specialty food industry nationally, and a great deal of entrepreneurship in Paterson and the surrounding region”.

The feasibility study will identify the needs of the local community as well as assess the requirements of converting an industrial building located at 163-177 Pennsylvania Avenue into a food business incubation program.

“We are pursuing this project as a way to stimulate economic development in Paterson and the surrounding region,” said Ruben Gomez, Director of Economic Development at the City of Paterson and Executive Director of the Paterson Restoration Corporation. “We have a very robust food
community in Paterson, and this project is a demonstration of our commitment to stimulate entrepreneurship among the many different ethnic groups who live in the region."

The City of Paterson will use the results of the FIC study to determine the feasibility and process for moving forward with the project, and will be armed with the organizational requirements, as well as the capital and operating costs that will be needed at the potential food incubation facility.

“We’re really excited about the possibility of a FDA-inspected commercial kitchen and food processing facility being located in Paterson, out of which food businesses in the region will be able to design, develop and commercialize their specialty products,” added Cooperhouse.

The Paterson Restoration Corporation and FIC have scheduled the Feb. 23 meeting to both inform and solicit input from potential food business entrepreneurs and community members from Paterson and throughout the region, regarding potential opportunities of the incubator program.

Individuals wishing to participate at the Feb. 23 information meetings are requested to go to http://foodinnovation.rutgers.edu/paterson.html to register. For further inquiries pertaining to registration to the Feb. 23 informational meeting, contact Diane Holtaway at holtaway@njaes.rutgers.edu or 856-459-1900, ext. 4514. For inquiries pertaining to PRC and City of Paterson businesses, contact Cristina Deutsch at cdeutsch@patersonnj.gov or 201-543-4085

**About the Rutgers Food Innovation Center**

The Rutgers Food Innovation Center (FIC) is a food business incubation and economic development accelerator program of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The FIC services food industry and agribusiness entrepreneurs throughout the entire state and region, and provides extensive programs in training and workforce development; customized and comprehensive business and technical mentoring services; and a 23,000 sq. ft. USDA- and FDA-inspected facility that enables design, development, analysis, commercialization and manufacture of value-added food products for sale to retail and foodservice markets. The FIC has served over 1,500 clients since its formation in 2001 and has been named “Incubator of the Year” by the National Business Incubation Association (NBIA) and an “Agricultural Innovation Center Demonstration Program” by the USDA. The FIC has also created a food business accelerator program, RutgersX, which services its high-growth “gazelle” clients with strategic mentoring and access to funding, which was recognized by the US SBA in its first Growth Accelerator Fund Competition. In addition, the FIC offers an international business attraction “Soft Landings” program that has been
recognized by the NBIA as the only program in the world that focuses on the food industry. The FIC is located within a federal Empowerment Zone and a State UEZ, in the rural community of Bridgeton, NJ. See more at http://foodinnovation.rutgers.edu.

About the Paterson Restoration Corporation (PRC)
The Paterson Restoration Corporation (PRC) core goals and values are to foster and maintain economic development throughout the City of Paterson through the implementation of development policies, programs and participation. See more at www.patersonrestoration.org.

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