Mr. Woodson said there are outstanding examples of blacks succeeding in business and thriving for decades. For example, in the first 50 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, Black Americans accumulated a personal wealth of $700 million. They owned more than 40,000 businesses, 40,000 churches, and 937,999 farms. The literacy rate climbed from 5% to 70%.

Mr. Woodson then shared the economic development model used by his Center for Neighborhood Enterprise:

- First, deal with any civil disorder by developing a safety zone for businesses. This is accomplished by building trust relationships with people in the community who have some success and/or have influence.
- Once successful individuals are identified, provide them with training and business mentors. When this approach is used, especially in a high crime area, any businesses built are typically not targets for robberies. The owners are known neighbors and the community wants the store to succeed.

Mr. Woodson's organization worked with Verizon Telecommunications to train residents of a high risk predominately Black community to drive Verizon trucks and do installations. As a result, Verizon brought services to the community without trouble. In addition, community residents filled the many new, well paying jobs.

In summing up The Center's approach, Mr. Woodson talked about: Developing small businesses; tapping into the creativity of local residents; using community advisers to help identify ideas; filling jobs with recognized community members; focusing on local strengths (no whining about past injustices); learning from the past business successes within the African American community; brokering between the community and those who can provide the business start up capital; asking established and successful businesses for help; and, if necessary, finding ways to subsidize both the new small businesses (until they are self supporting) and the already established small businesses (that are in danger of closing) in order to keep the jobs in the community.