

2019-04-11 West Side Meeting Notes

1. **What if people already own those parcels (asking about concept block design)?**
Answer: This is just a concept that demonstrates various strategies that are addressed in the West Side Community Renewal Plan. The goal is to visibly demonstrate how these strategies can be employed throughout the plan area.
2. **Will questions at this meeting be documented and answered in the report?**
Answer: Yes. You have three weeks to comment on the plan.
3. **Multiple questions were asked during the presentation. The participants were asked to save additional questions until the “break-out” groups.**
 - a. Why was the focus on only this portion (2nd Avenue Area) of the West Side?
Answer: This area had previously been designated as the “Home Ownership Zone,” but no plan was created to demonstrate how the various strategies could be successfully implemented; however, the intent is not to show a final constructed condition for just these blocks, but rather to demonstrate how various strategies discussed in the plan could be implemented across the West Side.
 - b. How were people chosen for door to door interviews?
Answer: The consultants explained the informal process which was used to interview individuals.
 - c. The West Side is a large area. When are you going to expand the study area?
Answer: The study area was selected as a demonstration, as noted above. It is not feasible, in the current effort, to complete a design for the entire area of the plan.
 - d. The gentlemen asked about the demolition process, and stated that only one house has been torn down. He wanted to know where the demolition money was going.
Answer: Please review the section of the report that addresses efforts that have already been completed. One of the recommendations of this report is a follow-up strategic demolition plan.
4. **Several individuals requested hard copies.**
We stated they would be distributed to local churches and organizations for review and comment. We worked with the Councilwoman Plear, to distribute copies of the report.
5. **One individual emphasized the effect of drugs on the community and felt it was not being addressed in the report. He stated that he has had his rental properties, which were under renovation, broken into multiple times because of drug related activities.**
Answer: Social issues are not directly a part of CURA’s overall mission and aren’t entirely covered in this report. However, creating a central community hub for outreach and assistance programs is recommended in the report. This will allow community members needing assistance to have a “one-stop-shop” for social services, etc. Since the planning team heard so much about social issues during the listening portion of our effort, we have addressed it in the report in sections related to social determinants of health, through the creation of a clearinghouse, as noted above, and by providing a comprehensive list of social service providers located in the plan area.
6. **A question was raised about the perception of the West Side area and how it is presented by local media.**
Answer: Districting is recommended to breakup areas of the West Side so they can be marketed and branded individually through wayfinding signage, promotional videos, etc.

7. Several people stated that they felt districting was a bad idea and that the West Side would still be generalized. They felt that it should all just be called “Charleston” regardless of where it was on a map.
8. A rental property owner present expressed his feelings that they are being over-taxed, or as he put it, “taxing us to death.” He felt that the number of abandoned properties was a result of the over taxing in the area.
9. What if the \$500k isn’t used in the Housing Improvement Zone?
10. Which districts would be implemented first?
Answer: The focus will be on the Housing Improvement Zone, as well as the other two commercial zones highlighted to create a focused effort of improvement and then allow for a ripple effect to begin on the West Side. While these areas have been targeted as focus areas, CURA will continue to work district wide to help improve the neighborhood.
11. Why does the 10-year plan focus on the same area as the 2008 10-year plan for the West Side?
Answer: Yes, it is the same focus area. The current recommendation is for the area to stay the same. But, within the first year of the study being adopted, it is recommended to look at newly available data to see if blight has expanded. If so, then it is recommended to expand the study area. It is proposed to remain the same in an effort to generate development with key partners and then move beyond the district to improve the whole West Side.
12. An individual present expressed his concern that there are no buyers interested in single-family homes available. He stated that the area has been infiltrated by investors. He also remarked that the median home price is \$42k.
13. How many people have applied for and been approved for assistance through MOECD program?
Answer: Information was not available at time of question.
14. An individual present spoke at length about that he didn’t feel it makes economic sense to make improvements to the area because the value of property has not increased over the last 10 years.
Answer: While this wasn’t really a question, I think it makes sense to explain why the report is suggesting making improvements to the public realm in the West Side study area. We are also highlighting entities that can begin improvements in the district that do not need the comps and can help increase the property value over time.
15. Is there anything in the plan to revitalize the Patrick Street Plaza area?
Answer: This is out of the study area.
16. Disappointment in Out-of-State individuals buying property and then doing nothing with it was expressed by several people.
Answer: The consultants explained the basics of the land bank program which is suggested in the study.
17. Who would be responsible for land bank?
Answer: City
18. Several people expressed disappointment in people who have been holding onto parcels/properties over the last several years but have made no efforts to improve them. They feel that these people are now going to be able to receive money for improvements.
19. Property values have not risen. How are you going to address it?
20. There was discussion about the services and educational opportunities provided through Goodwill. They felt the programs were not well advertised and that “nobody knows about them.
21. Several people asked about the dates for future meetings.
Answer: The consultants gave what information he had available at the time, but we should make sure to push these out to media outlets, etc.

- 22. One individual suggested we look at what larger cities (mainly Buffalo, NY) have done to improve blighted areas.**
Answer: These are addressed as case studies in the update.
- 23. A person suggested that social services need to be brought in early (to younger kids, etc.) to prevent them from going down a negative path.**
- 24. One individual suggested turning the West Side into a mixed income neighborhood.**
- 25. It was suggested that putting an outlet mall next to Pile Hardware would be a good way to improve the neighborhood, and that outlet shopping was what people want.**
- 26. It was also suggested that putting a Dave and Buster's into the Town Center Mall would save the mall.**
- 27. It was suggested that more input should have been sought from the churches in the area of the concept block design.**
Although not every property owner was addressed individually, the team made the effort (through more than 25 meetings and the walking tour of the neighborhood) to address as many impacted residents possible. The planning team appreciated their participation in the meeting tonight, which provided the opportunity for additional input.
- 28. It was noted that the walking survey must have been done during the day, since parking is an issue in the evenings and on the weekends, and was not addressed in the plan.**
The planning team agreed to look at the parking situation during various times of the day.
- 29. Concerns were expressed about the economic feasibility of new residential development.**
The planning team noted the opportunity to first engage non-profits with a focus on housing to help stabilize the property values.
- 30. A question was raised regarding the likelihood of progress, since little was observed over the previous 10 years.**
The planning team noted that there were many differences between the original plan and the update. Items that may have received a cursory mention in the original redevelopment plan were illustrated in greater detail to provide a roadmap to successful implementation.