

**Housing and Third Ward Revitalization Task Force
Minutes
September 18, 2023
6:30 p.m.**

The Housing and Third Ward Revitalization Task Force held virtually on Monday, September 18, 2023 at the Heman Park Community Center. The meeting commenced at 6:36 p.m. and adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Voting Members Present:

Byron Price – Chair
Linda Peoples-Jones
Patricia McQueen
Christina Dancy
Susan Murray
Mayela Zambrano
Christopher Flood

Voting Members Absent:

Craig Hughes
Ariel Gardner

Staff Present:

Brooke A. Smith, Deputy City Manager/Dir. of Economic Development
Community Ambassadors Rhonna Novy, Dr. Mona Rimson-Hope, Charlene Temple.

Minutes – June 12, 2023

Motioned by Linda Peoples-Jones, seconded by Christopher Flood and approved by voice vote to approve the minutes from the June 12, 2023 meeting.

Public Comments

Deputy City Manager Smith noted that there were no written comments received.

Rosalind Williams, 7408 Chamberlain Avenue

Rosalind Williams stated that she was responsible for the large turnout of community members at this meeting. She said she wanted to make some clarifying comments and began discussing her involvement in the Market at Olive Development. She noted that she is a city planner for over 50 years and has experience with TIFs. She discussed her involvement with the Mecham Park redevelopment effort. She also discussed the entity she founded and its purpose, and her work in University City. She said With Action was responsible for including the third ward in the TIF. She discussed the RFP that went out for the development and former Councilmember Paulette Carr's involvement. She also noted that she was hired by the City Manager at the time to be the Interim Planning Director, and she took that opportunity to put certain provisions in the TIF, including a first source agreement and a relocation plan with incentives for renters to be able to move comfortably and for those being bought out to buy back in to the third ward. She said she also put in the \$10 million. She said she wrote the statement because she is concerned about the follow through of the city for what is needed in the third ward.

Wanda Ware, no address provided.

Wanda Ware stated that she had a grave concern about a sinkhole at Olive and Pennsylvania. She wanted to know who is responsible for damage to her car. Chair Byron Price told her she should speak with her Councilmembers.

Ruby Lacy, 8015 Braddock

Ruby Lacy asked why all of the trees in the 8000 block of Canton were cut down but she's been trying to get the tree in front of her home cut down. She said she has called the appropriate office and was told the tree would not be cut down because it was not dead.

Chair Price clarified that this is not the third ward meeting that is conducted by Councilmembers Clay and Smotherson. He explained that this group was formed to get input from third ward residents to make recommendations to the city. He stated that the task force does not have any authority beyond making recommendations. He suggested the attendees talk to their Councilmembers.

Mary (no last name given), 8362 Orchard

Mary said she had a couple of concerns. She discussed the amount of rental property on her street and in the third ward, noting that a person cannot even tell who owns it. She said the tenants are not good neighbors. She said she also has concerns about finding out more from the direct source, saying that the city needs to keep residents more informed. She said she is also concerned about gentrification, noting that affordable housing has been an advantage for ward 3. She also noted there are a lot of empty storefronts that she hopes will be filled as the development continues. Lastly, she referenced Seafood City abandoning their store and leaving their product.

Chair Price recommending those present also complete the surveys so their suggestions can be properly recorded.

Cindy Russell, 7023 Northmoor Drive

Cindy stated that she is from Ward 1 and was moved by something posted by Rosalind Williams and that she thinks anything good for one part of University City is good for all parts. She said is also concerned about rental properties that contribute to the wealth of landlords but don't necessarily provide any stability for those living in the properties. She said if she understood correctly, the \$10 million from the development was supposed to be earmarked for developing houses so that people could buy in the third ward as opposed to renting. She said she thinks this is a good idea and if it was the decision made at the time, then it should be honored.

Chair Price stated that one or two individuals will not make this decision. He stated that the majority will make the decision. He said that people will complete the surveys and may have a number of ideas and that as Chair what he will not condone is individuals trying to decide something for 10,000 residents. He said the task force will move forward and do its due diligence and hear from the broader community before making decisions. He also reiterated that the task force has nothing to do with the laws and ordinances and suggested the members of the audience contact their Councilmembers on those matters. He reminded everyone that the task force is a recommending body and the City Council will have the final say.

Community Ambassador Update

Deputy City Manager Brooke Smith provided an update on the Community Ambassador program, noting that five (5) were hired and all live in the third ward. Smith noted that some were present at the meeting and had surveys available to be completed. She also discussed the community events that had been identified for the ambassadors to attend and discussed two that had already taken place. Smith noted that this is the information gathering stage and that surveys can be completed on paper or electronically. She informed the task force that the ambassadors will meet bi-weekly. She discussed the importance to have third ward specific events.

Linda Peoples-Jones asked if the task force could hear from the ambassadors about how things are going. Deputy City Manager Smith deferred to Dr. Mona Rimson-Hope who provide feedback on their community outreach experiences thus far and made recommendations on what more could be done.

Someone from the audience asked if there was a social media account. Deputy City Manager Smith responded that there is no standalone social media accounts but that the consultants are working on building out a website and the city's social media accounts will be used to disseminate information for the time being.

Mayela Zambrano stated that the website was already up.

Other opportunities for disseminating information were discussed as well.

Someone from the audience asked if this was being paid for out of the \$3 million. Deputy City Manager Smith confirmed that the consultant's fee was being paid from the third ward fund.

Christina Dancy asked Dr. Mona Rimson-Hope if the health fair she discussed was a city event or a third party event. Dr. Mona Rimson-Hope answered that the organization that puts it on is housed here in University City. She discussed ways to get the word out about the health fair, including the ROARS newsletter sent out by the city.

Chair Price asked if the task force could get a calendar of the community outreach activities and who is sponsoring the events. This opened the floor for the next agenda item.

Community Outreach

Deputy City Manager referred the task force members to their packets and discussed the community outreach events that are already scheduled. She noted that there are not a lot of events and they are looking for recommendations from the task force, even if it means scheduling events specific to the third ward.

The task force discussed options for community outreach. Chair Byron Price suggested working with the school district. Linda Peoples-Jones suggested putting something in the school districts newsletter Pride. Christina Dancy said she'd also spoken with the superintendent and making sure the schools are involved, possibly hosting events and the school in the third ward. Christina said she would also like to know what the third ward Councilmembers are saying, maybe even having a third ward meeting with the

councilmembers. Mayela Zambrano suggested putting something in the third ward newsletter that is emailed by the city council members, and using that as a regular means of communication. Linda Peoples-Jones said she had a conversation with Councilmember Smotherson and that both use of the newsletter and a town hall meeting were doable. Patricia McQueen stated that she had two ideas, the explore u city email that goes out weekly and reaching out to some of the businesses. Deputy City Manager also suggested the grand openings of two new businesses in the third ward as potential outreach opportunities.

Deputy City Manager Smith noted that she could also send out the summaries of the bi-weekly meetings with the ambassadors.

Linda Peoples-Jones asked to confirm how many ambassadors are on the roster, Smith answered five. Linda Peoples-Jones said she wanted to make sure all of the were working. Smtih explained how the ambassadors would be tag teaming the various events and outreach opportunities. Distributing the materials like yard signs and t-shirts was discussed as well.

Christina Dancy asked if an email address was created. Deputy City Manager Smith said her email can be used. Mayela Zambrano also informed everything of the website address.

Chair Byron Price stated that everyone that is a third ward resident should try to talk to three people about this initiative and get them to complete the survey.

Mayela Zambrano discussed the interactive map that is on the website for residents to leave comments. Linda Peoples-Jones discussed the importance of the including older residents who may not be tech savvy. Deputy City Manager Smith said that she has maps with sticker in her office that can be used if a town hall is held.

Christina Dancy asked if there was an opportunity to partner with the library to have a sign displayed there and a dedicated posting board for the third ward, noting the importance of reaching third ward residents and those visiting the third ward. She said it is important that people see work is constantly being done because a lot of people don't think anything is happening. Smith discussed posting the large signs with the QR code in various city-owned locations.

Susan Murray said a couple of questions and comments on the outreach. She said the Farmers Market was a waste of time for this time of year. She said UCIB garden tour had a \$20 admission and that people should not be encouraged to show up thinking it's a free event. She noted that the task force created a survey committee to create a survey and then stated that the survey created by the consultants was very basic and did not give enough information. She said when she mentioned to Ed (Yard & Co.) he said not to worry because there would be a second survey. Susan said she thinks the second survey should be mailed to every resident in the third ward. She said that since it's nearing the end of the information collection phase, would there be a second survey. Smith answered yes. Murray said then the current survey could be mailed, too. Smith asked what would be her suggestion for cover the cost of mailings. Murray said she did not think there would be a lot of information gained from this and that it would not be a representative sample. Smith said that it mailings would probably be better for the second survey and that the first survey was the kick-off to start the information gathering and that Yard does intend to meet with the

survey sub-committee to craft the second survey. Smith also noted that the consultants were meeting with the comprehensive plan consultants to make sure that survey questions were not being duplicated and that any third ward data would be made available to Yard & Co. Further discussion was had on this topic and possibly adjusting the timeline to make sure that the task force is hearing from as many third ward residents as possible.

Chair Byron Price asked if Yard & Co. could let the task force know what is an adequate sample size based on the number of residents in the third ward. Smith stated that she would ask Yard & Co. and get back to the task force.

Patricia McQueen noted that a resident did bring up social media and asked if it would be difficult to create a social media presence. Mayela Zambrano said she thought Yard & Co. was going to create one. Smith responded that she was unsure and could not remember where the City Manager landed on a stand-alone social media, but she would get back to the task force with an answer. Discussion was had on this topic.

Mayela Zambrano said she remembered in the budget that there were funds allocated for the events and said she would like to discuss this with the consultants. Discussion was had on options for drawing people out to the events, including having food and games.

Chris Flood asked if the group plans an event, how does that get coordinated with the consultants. Smith answered that she would be the one to coordinate it. Further discussion was had on this, including what the event would look like and the time commitment needed from the task force members and the community ambassadors. Chris Flood said his experience has been that the more effort you put in to crafting the questions, the more information you get back. Discussion was had on this. Chris Flood asked the members of the survey sub-committee if they would have time to hop on a meeting before the October meeting. They answered yes.

Christina Dancy asked what would be the intent of the first meetings? Is it an opportunity to engage with the community or to survey. She mentioned attending the Third Ward meetings held by the third ward Councilmembers. Further discussion was had on this. Susan Murray also mentioned that with winter coming, people will be less likely to come out to meetings. She said there is a need to move quickly and with substance.

Christina Dancy asked if there was an opportunity to work with Washington University since they are trying to steer their staff to purchase homes in the third ward. Brooke Smith said that she can reach out to see if there is an opportunity to partner.

Patricia McQueen stated that she thought the interactive map the consultant previously presented was fun and would be an engaging activity for community outreach.

Chair Byron Price asked if he fills out the survey, can they ask if the person wants a yard sign? He also asked if it was logistically possible to put the QR code on the refuse bill. Deputy City Manager said she would check and see. Chair Price asked if a discount could be provided if the resident completes the survey. Smith said she did not think that would be possible. Smith suggested possibly looping in some of the businesses. Susan Murray said the QR code should go on ROARS and PRIDE. Smith answered that both were possible.

Susan Murray confirmed that the outreach period ends in December. Smith answered yes. She asked if the sub-committee has a survey for October, does it have to go to the Council or can it be available for use in December. Smith said she did not think the survey would have to go to Council. Discussion was had on this.

Chris Flood pointed out that while the schedule can be changed, the consultants are working by contract and while it may be able to be extended, it will likely cost more money.

Patricia McQueen asked if during the formal meetings, if the task force can receive a financial statement. Discussion was had on this. Deputy City Manager Smith said she would submit the request to the City Manager, but reminded the task force members that their objective is to make goals and recommendations for the use of the funds, noting that they are not the financial stewards of those funds. She also noted that the budget is posted, which includes that fund. Further discussion was had on whether the information should be made available to the task force for review or to the public as a whole. Christina Dancy said her recommendation would be to ask the Council to share that information with the entire city, not just something special for the task force. Patricia McQueen asked where the information would be. Christina Dancy responded that there are two councilmembers for the third ward and they should be held accountable for having more meetings with the third ward or maybe including the information in their third ward newsletter. Patricia McQueen said she has a feeling that it needs to be out there because right now it is not compiled in a way that it can be readily understood by the public. Further discussion was had.

Chair Byron Price stated that on his street, only he and his wife know about this process. He said only a small group of people know about this initiative. He said it is up to the task force to let people know about the initiative. He said the City Council is responsible for managing the money and this task force is charged with getting the information from the largest group of people possible and make recommendations to the City Council. He said the priority should be getting information from as many third ward residents as possible.

Mayela Zambrano asked if the task force would need to vote on hosting a community event. Deputy City Manager Smith said no.

Deputy City Manager Smith stated that former City Manager Frank Ollendorf wanted to speak. Chair Byron Price extended the courtesy of allowing Mr. Ollendorf to speak outside of the Public Comment section.

Frank Ollendorf said he would like to make three brief comments. He said he is here for the same reason everyone in the room is because U City is a great place to live, especially U City north. He said those present wouldn't be here if they didn't think they could make it better. He said the task force needs to find out what they can do better for north of Olive. He said over 50% of the unpaved streets in U City are north of Olive. He said that three of the parks north of Olive require you to walk in the street to get to the park, noting the need for a sidewalk along North and South to get to Millar Park. He said there are over 200 homes in U City that are currently under potential condemnation for code violations and asked how many are north of Olive. He said the bad homes are north of Olive. He noted that this is public information. He said that besides asking the citizens and residents north of Olive, noting that he does not refer to it as the third ward because that is a political denomination, he said he would keep thinking positively about it. He said the question is how to make it better. He said the first place he would send the survey is to University City

and ask them if they know what is needed. He said the city knows better than the citizens what is missing.

Chris Flood said that reminds him of a request the committee made a year ago for data publicly available about the impact of the flood in the third ward. He said it had been a year since the request was made and his is losing patience. He said he wants to know where the condemned or possibly condemned homes are. He said the task force was told to make a formal resolution to ask for this information and he believes it is an absurd request to get information from the city. He said he knows the city is short staffed, but the task force needs to get information so they can make decisions about these things.

Deputy City Manager Smith stated that Planning and Development Director John Wagner is pulling together the information that was requested. She then noted that the reason the vote is required because an individual can make a request for any information via Sunshine Request, but the body needs to vote on requesting information is deems necessary to perform its assigned tasks. She noted that if the information is written, it will be provided before the next meeting via email or Dropbox and if the information must be presented, then John Wagner will come to the next meeting.

Chair Byron Price asked if there were any other questions. Susan Murray said there were also other questions asked and that the city staff did not have the work staff to staff this as planners, and that consultants were needed. Susan then went through a list of questions to ask the consultants to provide the task force. She said this information will let the task force see the big picture in addition to hearing from the residents on what they want. She said it will allow the task force to see patterns so that when they get to the end to make recommendations, they can be targeted at the needs and not be scattershot.

Chris Flood asked if the task force needs to make a resolution to that effect. Deputy City Manager Smith said it would be best to take a vote to make sure that this is what the task force as a body wants.

Motioned by Christopher Flood, seconded by Susan Murray and carried by voice vote to request the following information from the consultants:

1. Summarize the census data for the third ward
2. Summarize the third ward portion of the draft comprehensive plan
3. Summary of the third ward portion of the U City Economic Development Plan
4. Summary of the Olive Corridor Redevelopment Plan
5. Map of the Housing Violations (a map, not a list of housing violations)
6. Map of Properties effected by the flood city-wide
7. Map of rental properties versus owner-occupied properties

Next Meeting – October 16, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Adjourn

Motioned by Linda Peoples-Jones, seconded by Christina Dancy and carried by voice vote to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.