

**Housing and Third Ward Revitalization Task Force
Minutes
August 26, 2024
6:30 p.m.**

The Housing and Third Ward Revitalization Task Force meeting was held in person at the Heman Park Community Center, located at 975 Pennsylvania Avenue on Monday, August 26, 2024. The meeting commenced at 6:38 p.m. and adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Voting Members Present:

Byron Price – Chair
Linda Peoples-Jones
Christina Dancy
Susan Murray
Patricia McQueen
Ariel Gardner

Voting Members Absent:

Craig Hughes

Staff Present:

Brooke A. Smith, Deputy City Manager/Dir. of Economic Development

Others attending:

Representatives from Yard & Co. and Collabo.

Minutes

Motioned by Linda Peoples-Jones, seconded by Christina Dancy and carried by voice vote to approve the minutes from February 20, 2024 and March 18, 2024.

Public Comments

Chair Price noted that the Public Comment section would be split to have one at the beginning and one near the end of the meeting since there were quite a few people in attendance. He also noted that each person would only be allowed to speak one time.

No one wanted to speak, so the entire Public Comment section was moved to the Task Force Member Comments section.

Yard & Co.

Kevin Wright with Yard & Co. was in attendance for the meeting. Ed Sharrer and Patrick Brunner attended virtually. Kevin thanked everyone for coming and reviewed the draft plan and updated the task force on the Community Outreach Event held at Rabe Park on August 24th. He provided details on what their team heard from the residents that attended the event. He also thanked those task force members that attended and interacted with the residents. Task Force members talked about how they thought the event went and some of the key things they heard. Kevin cycled through photos from the event, and he reviewed emerging themes that were heard during the event. He noted that approximately 100 people came and went throughout the event.

Discussion was had. Task force members asked questions and provided feedback.

Public Comments (continued)

Lisa Johnson, 7307 Trenton Avenue

Ms. Johnson stated that she just purchased her home and did not know she was in a low-income housing area. She said she attended Saturday's event, and she has no issue with people getting assistance, but it sounds like this is all about attracting the low-income type of community. She also said she was looking for some type of assistance, but questioned whether she would be eligible because of her income.

Juleta Burrell, 1233 Mt. Olive

Ms. Burrell said her original concern was that if all 11 acres of trees are cut down, there will be flooding. She said there are good things in the report and suggested that perhaps something could be done with the people who own the trees to influence their use of the land. She said she would also like to see the River Des Peres put on the map because if there is concern about flooding, it should be known where the river goes. She said if all the trees are cut down, where is the water going to go. She said watched when Costco was built and she thought the city would hold them accountable from some sort of mitigation, but that did not happen. She also suggested instead of one large development, maybe it could be spread out to the various vacant lots throughout. She also suggested that to encourage places to live for seniors who cannot take care of a place, maybe a carriage house or mother in law place attached to a residence would be prudent. She suggested thinking outside of the box.

Charles Price, 1565 Quendo Ave.

Mr. Price stated that he has been living here since 1997. He said it was so nice when he moved and that it still is. He referenced a neighbor that was very good at keeping everyone advised of what's going on in the City. He discussed establishing block units again and said the activities and programs are good, but having the block units available that has information and knows about the resources would be helpful. He discussed the importance of being able to work with the city officials and neighbors and said it was important to work with the councilmembers to establish a block unit for the third ward. He also noted that there is an issue with investor properties.

Councilmember Stacy Clay, 1328 Midland Drive

Councilmember Clay confirmed that the process is for the task force to provide recommendations and that the City Council will make the final decision. He said that given the work that has been put in, he is confident the recommendations will be solid. He said that as a matter of course, he needed to underscore Chair Byron Price's statement that the Council does have the final say. He discussed allocation of dollars, noting that this ultimately lies with the Council as well. He said how they got to the 10 million, etc. was done by the Council. He reiterated that the Council will decide what plan gets executed and the dollars associated with it. He addressed the Mt. Olive issue, noting that the property being discussed is part of the cemetery owned by the United Hebrew Congregation. He said they have been looking to sell the back part of their land to the west and they have found a developer. He said they are going through the process, noting that it is a private transaction. He said they will need to go through the process, noting that the city can only get involved if they run afoul of the city's processes.

Councilmember Bwayne Smotherson, 1243 Purdue

Councilmember Smotherson informed those in attendance that they can form their own block units. He stated that he was president of a block unit before. He said what happened is that the people in those organizations got older, the younger people never joined, and the block units essentially dissolved. He said he would be willing to assist residents in forming those groups. He also noted that the block units have gone digital, referring to the app NextDoor. He said the block units will help with communication in the third ward, noting that a huge issue is the third ward is not connected. Someone asked about Mt. Olive and he reiterated that this is a private transaction and if there are concerns, then people should come out to the Plan Commission meetings and City Council meetings.

Patrick Fox, 1309 Purdue

Mr. Fox thanked the task force for doing the work they've done. He said he was pleased to see the perspective of recognizing the purpose of the first initial phases are to use the TIF dollars. He said watching the journey and the task force evolve away from using the resources to give a pass for the historic underinvestment of prior city leaders is pleasing. He said in looking at the plan, he has a few comments and recommendations. He said the overwhelming majority of residents say they want home repair grants but noted that it is not where the majority of the dollars is going. He also said if this is the final report, it is missing the 36-month work plan which was listed as a deliverable.

Frank Ollendorf, 8128 Cornell

Former City Manager Frank Ollendorf discussed the Economic Development in the city and maintaining properties in the third ward. He said during his time these programs were run successfully. He said he would like to take part this evening in finishing up getting more specific with the recommendations. He gave an example of the \$5 million in TIF funds for development along Olive and discussed how the Economic Development Retail Sales Tax came to be. He said it was intended to be used for improvements along Olive, noting that he promised (during his time as City Manager) that the funds would be used for the improvements along Olive. He said that the City Council in the last few years has failed to allocate those funds to the improvements that he promised on behalf to he city. He said one of the task force's first recommendations should be to use the EDRST funds to move the improvements on Olive forward. He said the TIF funds should not be used, but that EDRST funds should be used because that is what he promised when he was City Manager. He said that \$250,000 every year goes to the Loop which is finished and that the task force should recommend that the EDRST funds should be redirected to Olive. He suggested the TIF funds be used to acquire property for redevelopment. He provided examples of when the city has done this in the past. He said the city should use the EDRST funds to make the improvements along Olive and the TIF funds to purchase property for redevelopment.

Baslind, Native Women's Care Circle

She said there are members of her community that live in University City that she is representing, noting that she resides in the City of St. Louis. She said she was speaking for those that do not have a voice, the undeveloped, underutilized properties. She said in defense of the trees and discussed how that causes global warming. She agreed with the need for block units, noting that it is the best way to get results from the city. She discussed the importance of those groups including difference age groups. She said in the present we are borrowing resources from our children and grandchildren and discussed the importance of maintaining the natural resources. She said it is disheartening to see more and more

places being developed for consumerism as communities are being eradicated. She said she was speaking for the trees and her relatives that feel they have been unheard. She also discussed the importance of the equitable distribution of the information, so people have the opportunity to respond before the impact occurs to people. She also thanked Mr. Ollendorf, stating that she has been in the community since the 70s and she has seen the development going on and would like to see the preservation of the neighborhoods.

Kevin Taylor, 7022 Canton Avenue

Mr. Taylor said he has to apologize because most of the people on the task force and they go way back. He listed numbers for the amount of time the task force has been working on this, the amount of money spent on the consultant, the number of years that the TIF will be active and the annual amount of the funds from the TIF. He said the math is not mathing. He said the task force needs to go back and review the minutes from the City Council meeting because the city manager said he would make his own recommendations if he did not agree with those of the task force and that that is not fair. He said any recommendations from the City Manager or City Council should be vetted back through the public. He discussed implementation and noted that he has never heard the task force say what their role is in implementation. He discussed barriers and said he believes there are barriers and said he heard that the city administration was the biggest barrier that they've encountered. He said he does not know what the task force's role is in RPA 3, which is another \$5 million. He almost mentioned there was \$1 million in EDRST funds that was earmarked for Olive. He said they need to ask questions.

Chair Price and other task force members commented throughout the public comment portion in response to the speakers.

Task Force Member Comments

Once comments were done, Kevin Wright acknowledged the community ambassadors and the role they played in the process. Kevin then discussed next steps.

Discussion was had, task force members asked questions and provided feedback. Discussion was had about the timeline and any deadlines for presenting the final plan over to Council. Deputy City Manager Brooke Smith explained how the process will work once the task force finalizing its recommendations.

Discussion was had about the amount of involvement the City Manager and Deputy City Manager had in the plan and feedback provided to the consultants.

Discussion was had on whether the task force should expect that the City Manager would send the plan back to the task force with comments before taking it to Council and noting that it was clear that if the task force and City Manager disagree, the task force's recommendation would be submitted to the City Council as is. Chair Price reiterated that these meetings are public and available for anyone to listen and stated that he believes this is a moot discussion as everyone has access to the same information. Deputy City Manager Smith noted that the task force will present their plan to the City Council through their chair at a study session.

Next Meeting - September 16, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

Adjourn

Motioned by Linda Peoples-Jones, seconded by Christina Dancy to adjourn. Carried by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.