

Community Revitalization

Meeting #4

1/24/2018

Meeting Start: 5:30 pm

To start the meeting Mr. Tyus gave opening remarks, explained how the night's meeting would go, and announced that the next Revitalization meeting would be February 5, 2018. He also stated that there would be additional outreach to other groups.

Mr. Tyus stated that Group 2's notes were not present because he needed more information about their priorities.. He stated that additional outreach would be extended to Group 2. He also stated the notes were transcribed word for word, as The City did not want to assume anything.

Group 1: Connectivity and Partnerships

Group 1 was asked to take the stage. A question was asked about the definition of blight reduction. Mr. Tyus stated that he wanted each group to define the terms they used as he did not want to assume. .

Group 1 was represented by Vivian Goodman, Mr. Johnson, and Chris Brodnicki. Mr. Tyus asked Group 1 to explain their priorities.

Mr. Johnson stated that the Gov't entities need Memorandum of Understandings with each other as sharing information would help accomplish similar goals more effectively.

Vivian stated that having all the different agencies and services available in Decatur, all linked to one website would be beneficial for the residents. (My own side-note, llcu.org has a great resource page)

Mr. Tyus asked if there was a group that coordinated all the agencies in Decatur. "No" was the overall response but some citizens brought up the 211 hotline. Another person also stated that HSAC used to do this, however HSAC dissolved and is now the 211 hotline. Mr. Johnson brought up the fact that 1 agency over-seeing all agencies would be overwhelming; perhaps what we need is one church agency that oversees/keeps up with the churches, one social service agency to do the same for the social service agencies, with medical, etc. Chris also brought up the City Scout app, and how you could look up a plethora of services and information utilizing it. Mr. Tyus stated that perhaps our job is to get people to use the good tools we already have (211, City Scout, etc.). Mr. Johnson stated that advertising is expensive and they still believe one location for all information would be beneficial.

"To what end are we providing all this information?" Mr. Brodnicki that businesses wouldn't be stepping on each other's toes or duplicating services.

Ingrid Smith stated that she was concerned that gov't entities were not working together. That all the gov't entities should be assisting in the making of the large plans (revitalization, strategic plan, etc.) to

best use all our resources and to ensure the different gov't entities aren't stepping on each other's toes. She was specific as to the School board's 5-year plan and the City's revitalization plan. Mr. Tyus assured her that both entities are working together. Walt Smith commented he believes that the Gov't entities are not working together and there is not enough information sharing and planning between the Park District, City, Township, DPS 61, etc.

Fred Spannaus commented that although he has spoken with the City regarding the 5-year strategic plan for DPS61, he feels there is not a lot of working together, considering that the next big meeting for the strategic plan is already scheduled for Feb 5, 2018. Mr. Spannaus said this made no sense, to have 2 big meetings on the same night. Mr. Tyus stated that the date was tentative and they would discuss the dates with the school board next time. Mr. Lai also stated that there would be more meetings scheduled in the future.

Someone commented that he did not see the "framework" for Group 1's priority list. He stated that he felt it was "just a list". Mr. Brodnicki responded that getting people to communicate was a challenge, and asked how do we make this happen? Mr. Johnson states that there wasn't framework to their list because that wasn't the point of tonight's meeting. The point tonight is to narrow down priorities and that there was no sense in wasting resources.

Someone commented that after 3 group meetings he felt the process should go further. He also did not understand the group notes that were provided. He did not have a good idea of what the groups meant. Mr. Tyus stated that these are things we also need clarity on. This is why we sent out the notes beforehand and asked for changes/clarity. He also stated that he felt that some of his groups (group unknown) priorities were not reflected in his list.

Mr. Brodnicki stated he appreciated City staff pulling out bullet points from their notes. He states that it helped. Mr. Lai stated that this meeting was for each group to clarify their notes and their priorities.

Walt Smith stated this meeting is premature without the framework of what is needed in each neighborhood. He stated that each entity and their respective strategies or plans/objectives (DPS61, The City, Park District, County, Township, etc.) should be presented to this group so that the group can have a clearer view of what this City needs. He stated that the group needed to collectively examine all the institutions and their plans and then the City needs to make one Universal plan to present to this group and ask the group to comment on it. He wanted to know how we get all the agencies/institutions to share their plans?

Mr. Tyus stated that we always get feedback. That we do not get enough input before making plans; we designed these group meetings so that we could get as much information/input as possible before moving forward in making a plan to present to the group. We did this to make sure that people were heard. He assured Mr. Smith that the institutions mentioned had been invited and that they have been part of the process.

Mr. Johnson stated that Walt illustrated beautifully the reason Group 1 thinks that Memorandum of Understandings between gov't entities are needed.

Mr. Tyus also stated that the voting tonight was not end all be all. The point of the groups meeting as a whole was to ensure that everyone is heard. Ray stated that we didn't want to take a top-down approach; the City doesn't want to create a framework behind closed doors.

Marcia Phillips stated that Group 2 had met with different groups and was concerned that the City had not researched other Cities and their plans. She was concerned that they were still separated into groups. Mr. Tyus replied that this was the reason we were all meeting as one large group...

Man in crowd stated that maybe the groups were not ready to vote and wanted to know the purpose of the vote. Mr. Tyus stated that ranking the priorities will help direct us to a starting point. Ray stated that we could've had the individual groups vote, but we wanted clarity from the group at large.

Ms. Evans stated that when we are talking about community versus neighborhood that it confuses her as there is a difference between the two. Mr. Lai stated that the City wanted to focus on neighborhoods but realized that there were bigger issues that extended city-wide. Thus, the revitalization covers both community and neighborhoods. Mr. Tyus stated that some people would consider on-the-job training as not affecting neighborhoods but it does.

Bruce Bullamore stated that there are 2 ways to view problems: Look at them as a forest or just trees...He said the 1st step; unless there is a proper way to inner-connect our gov't entities there is no way to move on to the details of helping the neighborhoods.

Group 3: Community Appearance

Mr. Johnson started off the conversation by asking Group 3 to explain their priorities...

Group 3: Universal garbage is important, as is curbside pickup for leaf waste. He states that it would make it easier for people who have trash to dispose of it instead of dumping it around town or in alleys and abandoned properties. He stated that recycling events aren't easy to attend and that there aren't enough. Suggested that we have one at least once a month. Another member of Group 3 brought up painting the plywood that we use to board up properties with artwork.

This group suggested that we start a Tool lending program so that individuals who cannot afford tools can still have an opportunity to make home repairs. Group 3 suggested starting a Developer Competition to fix up neighborhoods. Give the developers an incentive to work in the regeneration/older neighborhoods and fix what we have. Mr. Tyus really liked this.

Group 4: Gov't Regulations

Bob Wetzel states that only 3 out of Group 4's 14 people attended the meeting tonight. He states that there are a ton of commercial buildings and houses that need rehabbed. Group 4 states that it is essential to shorten the time between abandonment of the buildings to the rehab or demo phase. They suggested starting a building trade school for high school/ young adults that would then rehab these abandoned buildings. They state that collaboration would be necessary. .

They also suggested that we take the code enforcement fines and invest that money back into the neighborhoods. The example was given "if you charge \$100 fine to mow one yard, turn around and mow more yards in the same neighborhood with that \$100)

They suggested that a performance bond demo be tied to commercial properties to avoid current owners flipping properties that are uninhabitable or that any buyer would be unwilling/unable to bring up to code. This way, there is still money to demo the building in a few years if it remains empty/uninhabitable. They also stated that we need to change the regulations for the trustee lots as they state that if a person buys the lot next door to themselves they would not be allowed to build on that lot or put up a garage.

Mr. Wetzel also brought up the idea that we need a neighborhood compliance officer; someone who would assist individuals with borderline code enforcement issues, get assistance before they go to code enforcement. Ms. Evans asked, "Where does neighborhood standards fit in here" and Mike replied that it is a compliance vs enforcement officer where people are getting intervention and help before being fined and taken to court.

Someone stated that people like the elderly are unable to afford or perform maintenance on their homes and we need to support them. She also asked if there were programs for young people to purchase these foreclosed/abandoned homes that need rehabbed at reduced rates? Mr. Wetzel responded that no, there isn't but there are models of programs similar in other cities.

Someone stated that rental properties need inspections for safety and to make sure the properties are up to code for low income renters. She also stated that a lot of historic houses downtown are empty and that their owners do not live in IL. Ms. Smith also seconded this statement and followed up with the statement that the City needs a land lord registration program that includes rental inspections. She stated that a lot of our rentals are not up to code and land lords are absentee. She states this would ensure safe housing.

Mr. Wetzel also brought up the idea of not being able to sell a property unless it was up to code/out of code enforcement. He also supported, along with his group, the idea of a landlord registry.

Group 5: Energizing Existing Neighborhoods

Mr. Tyus commented that some neighborhood groups needed enhanced or re-energized. He asked the group "are there people out there who want to be a part of a neighborhood group who aren't?" Allen D. responded that his group has found that many neighborhoods don't have an organized group making their neighborhood better. He thinks every neighborhood should have a working plan since each neighborhood has unique issues. He stated that some neighborhoods just want/need more trees/sidewalks whereas some neighborhoods need to get rid of drug dealers and drug houses. He states that they want to see overlap and work together within the neighborhood groups and plans.

Group 5 also stated that relationships with the realtors in Decatur are essential since they direct people as to where the "best" neighborhoods are and we need to promote how great our neighborhoods are. This group also brought up the government regulations and how being able to build on the trustee lots would be beneficial.

Mr. Smith also spoke as to how he felt that the following items had been overlooked: blueprint for an urban village...He asked if this was overlooked and stated that he felt his points were lost in the "shuffle" of the meetings. He states that institutions that we pay taxes to need a universal plan for the whole city

that will be enable Decatur to be its best. He stated that we must involve other entities and that he feels that the school districts 5 yr. plan does not mirror the City's plan. He reiterated that everyone needs to be on the same page.

Mr. Tyus asked Walt "what does the process look like for a universal plan?" To which Allen D. responded that a school board member never sat in at their group meetings (group 5) or the Park District. He states that they aren't here and that the group is unaware of their plans. He stated that all the plans need revisited so that we can start there instead of starting from scratch. He stated that he could not find access/there was no City strategic plan, park district strategic plan, etc. and stated that he felt he had been shuffled around by City employees while trying to obtain additional information for his group. Ms. Smith also commented that all the leading entities need to get together quarterly to share what they are doing (she gave examples of the Mayor, City Manager, head of township, Park district, school district). She stated that it doesn't need to be a public meeting, but just a meeting so that they can share information.

At this time, someone stated that he had found the Macon County-City of Decatur 10-year comprehensive plan online, he just wanted people to know that the internet is a great resource.

Francie Johnson stated that in the 90's the City divided the community into neighborhood boundaries and that same neighborhoods are too small to develop their own strategic plan. She suggested that if you care about a neighborhood, that you should live there. She also stated that she loved the phrase "don't make plans for us, without us."

Christine Gregory stated that in the world of education they would create a "crosswalk" document which was a summary of what is uniquely ours and share it. She thanked Mr. Lai and Mr. Tyus and asked if they would get with the School Board, Park District, Richland, Township, County, etc. and create a "cross-walk" document that summarizes what each is doing/focusing on. Mr. Tyus agreed that it was a good idea and that we would have one for the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm