

Vista Partnership: Safety & Blight - meeting I

12/4/2014

"Accelerating the revitalization of a 20-block area in Southwest Detroit with a focus on economic opportunity, social equity, and most importantly—resident planning and partnership."

Overview

On Thursday, December 4th, Vista staff and residents convened for the first meeting of the Safety and Blight work group. During this meeting, residents and staff discussed various topics including: *What are the most pressing issues regarding safety and blight, and what do we hope to accomplish? And, what are some ways we can start addressing these concerns?*

Most Pressing Concerns

The question was presented to the group, "what came to mind, or what aspects were you hoping to work on regarding safety and blight?" Here are some of the responses:

Lighting

- Why does it seem like light poles are being taken out, but not replaced?
- There seems to be no communication on behalf of the public lighting department regarding lighting issues towards residents
- We need cleaner, and brighter alleyways
- Put in some new lights by Aerochemical (sp?)
- Faulty light on the corner where my business is
- Doesn't feel comfortable walking down the street at night
- Would like to see more people turning their porch lights on at night

Blight

- Blight in the neighborhood - vacant homes, why is it taking so long? Why do they only take one down at a time? Hazards for school children, risk of arson
- We need more community relations with the police—working with residents on blight issues
- The commercial burn pile at Hubbard & Vernor
- Can forestry service take down old, decaying trees to help provide safer areas, more light exposure?
- If people feel safe and comfortable in their neighborhoods, they'll come out more—there will be more foot traffic
- The painted art murals are beautiful and would like to see more, other graffiti is not
- There are problems with vandalism
- Graffiti can be unsightly and very irritating

Safety

- Doesn't feel the police presence is strong enough
- Drug dealers don't have any repercussions, are not removed
- Need more response, relations, and communication with the local authorities
- Has drug activity going on next door, feels stuck
- Seems like 25th street crime has been getting worse lately
- We can only ask so much from the police; inadequate in protecting businesses
- Crime on 23rd street and Ruskin
- Need more police patrol
- Bushes and high grass in dark spaces—people can hide in the bushes
- La Nortena—sits empty, does not allow parking there; we need more accessibility in certain areas

(responses)

Safety

- Has anyone tried 224-Dope phone number? (A resource to help increase surveillance of drug activity in the area)
- CompStats – Wayne State University – helps detect “hotspots” in the neighborhood
- Honey Bee Market, alley is renovated, clean, and well-lit
- Think of the total money spent on security by private enterprises in the area—it's a lot! everyone is doing their own security, there isn't a cohesive strategy

Lighting

- Can SWS mount brighter lights on the front of the their buildings on main thoroughfares?
- How can we speed up or expedite lighting process – Councilwoman Raquel?

Blight

- 25% of the lots and buildings in the Vista area are vacant
- Imagine if we activated service tire or buildings in Vista to help increase business and foot traffic in the area

Addressing Concerns

After discussing some of our most pressing concerns (lighting seems to be very popular), we briefly discussed some ways that we might be able to address some of these issues.

Ideas and Action Steps

- willing to pay a small fee for security patrolling the street; police services seem to be better in the last year or so; would like to see what the police have to say at the next Vista meeting
- police at the next meeting—they need to be invited and attend
- Porch lights, sensors, mercury vapor bulbs
- Used to have police safety meetings every week; need meetings that have value
- Gather some research about ways to improve, update, inform DTE light bulb replacing program

- Can we talk to Raquel about blighted structures and dilapidated speculation buildings and lots?
- Are there discounted rates for businesses to install brighter lights in their businesses
- How can we commission more murals for service tire? /surrounding area? (new murals with local artists)
- Are there opportunities to find lighting discounts for businesses? (research)
- Bagley lighting – how long will the lights be shut off on Bagley? (research)
- Porch light campaign – visit local residents, advocate for nighttime porch lights on, take a survey of whose porch lights work (research)
- Viaduct lighting, renovation, and murals
- How many police patrol cars are available at night? (research)
- Researching security—who has security in the area? How much is being spent on security? (research)

Additional note: Dan P drove Vernor from Patton Park (on 12-12-14) to the Train Station early Friday while dark. Here is the observation. Every side street I could see from Vernor appeared to have lighting, a very encouraging sign. The connector streets, as noted below were dark (Vernor, Junction, Clark, Scotten). So what is said below makes sense with what I saw. Vernor was lit up from the W Grand to the Freeway, but totally dark on the other side from the Freeway to the train station. Looked like power out in that area, no lights on Vernor or the side streets from Freeway to train station.

Email from the city that was on a list serve post helped explain city approach:

. **Lighting Construction Plan** - The lighting plan is designed to initially focus on residential streets, so those streets are scheduled for construction first. Once all overhead residential streets are complete, then we start on what are called “**Collector**” streets. These are streets such as Vernor, Junction, Livernois, Clark and West Grand Blvd that ‘collect’ traffic and move it throughout the city. Collector streets are scheduled to begin once all residential streets are complete, and there is often a month or so lag behind the overhead residential construction.

While there is still work to do on this, there is progress being made. More updates will appear in future minutes of this work group.