

Land Use & Recreation Work Groups

Combined Meeting I – 3/5/2015

Overview

On Thursday, March 5th, the Land & Building Use and Recreation work groups convened for a combined first meeting. We asked those who attended, “What interested you in particular about land use or recreation within the Vista partnership efforts?” We also had discussions around several topics including: Local recreation updates and successful models of recreation centers, the Dequindre Cut extension, current land and building use in the Vista area,

Initial Discussion

Residents who attended the combined Land Use & Recreation work group meetings were asked “What is it about land use, green space, or recreation that you were particularly interested in?” Here are some of the responses below:

- There used to be a lot of recreation spaces in the neighborhood, most have disappeared now
- Would like to see what can be done with empty land, and what can benefit the community
- It’s exciting to think about land and transforming spaces; when people see visible transformation on the street level—that’s exciting
- The area is changing—it is important to preserve green spaces while we have it because it can easily be developed
- It would be really nice to see more parks in the area for people
- Recreation spaces are great ways to get neighborhood engaged and facilitate hands-on participation
- Would like to see more for sports: Futbol/Futsal courts, basketball hoops

Recreation

After the initial discussion, staff and residents conversed about several topics around recreation. Some significant statistics emerged from staff surveying the neighborhood in the summer of 2014—where 69% of residents would like to see more recreation areas as a top development priority, as well as 63% of residents stated that green spaces were *also* a top development priority in the community.

HYPE Community Center

Staff took a visit to the HYPE community center on the border of Detroit & Dearborn Heights—located off of Warren Avenue. This was a rather large, nonprofit recreation center in which they were highly successful. They utilized a variety of methods to maintain and sustain the center including:

- unique programming like women only exercise rooms and classes
- life skills & enrichment classes and adult education
- youth and adult sports leagues
- memberships, corporate sponsors, leagues and team events
- summer camps

Roberto Clemente

Staff gave updates about the Roberto Clemente recreation center in Hubbard-Richard:

- since the YMCA has closed down at Clark Park, there are really very few indoor recreation opportunities for residents and youth
- the RC facility does seem to be underutilized from people in the neighborhood
- Vista staff met with city officials, toured the center twice
- the recreation currently has 400 members, \$5 annual membership fee
- Maybe the city would consider it to be locally run such as the situation at Clark Park...?
 - o would increase foot traffic
 - o would increase activity at the center
- The recreation center and city is open to new programming
- Is there a way to reestablish the Roberto Clemente community board, to help aid with programming and revenue?—would help the city and the community
- Could Clark Park do programming indoors?

The Dequindre Cut Green Link

Planning for an extension of the Dequindre Cut is currently in the works. The plan would extend the bicycling route from Eastern Market to the riverfront and possibly go to the Grand Central train station. Vista staff would like to invite representatives from this initiative to the next community meeting if possible.

Land & Building Use

Next, Vista staff and residents discussed some developments and updates within the Land & Building use work group:

- Within the Vista area, there is 400,000 square feet of commercial building space, of which approx. 100,000 is sitting vacant; it's surprising that that much building space is vacant
- W Vernor, within the Vista area has gone from 35% occupancy to 65% occupancy in the last 8 years
- 30% of the land mass in the area is vacant
- What do we do with the vacant buildings? And what do we do with the vacant fields?
- 12-19% of the land mass of the city of Detroit is vacant
- A wave of foreclosures coming to the city, could be potentially harmful to the stabilization of neighborhoods and add to the blight and vacancy problems of Detroit

- If you have any neighbors going through foreclosure, please refer them to Southwest Economic Solutions—they have a foreclosure counseling program
- Are there plans to expand the Vista development boundaries and initiatives?; not at this time, though it's possible in the future

St. Anthony's church

Vista staff gave some updates about St. Anthony's church:

- the church came to SWHS to purchase the building for preservation and use
- great open space upstairs that can be used for community programming and events
- would like to give residents a tour at some point for envisioning possibilities for the space
- would like to hold one of our community meetings at St. Anthony's

Neighborhood Beautification Day

Ongoing for the last 8 years, NBD brings selects sites within SW Detroit and brings volunteers together to undergo beautification projects.

- had our first meeting about two weeks ago, next meeting on March 24th
- looking for a call for submissions, have about 5 or 6 right now, 3 are in the Vista area
- if this group has a specific idea for a lot—please let us know

Detroit Garment Guild Group (DG3)

- offers sewing certifications through Henry Ford Community College; industrial sewing and apparel
- an entity that is looking for space within the Hubbard-Richard neighborhood/Vista area to possibly set up a site for training programs

Detroit Farm & Garden

- Would like to do a pop-up flower sale in May—bring color, organic plants, vegetable transplants
- Can be a catalyst for other vendors to want to participate

Galapagos Arts

- Major art firm from Brooklyn moving to Detroit. Has bought the APAC building between 16th and 17th street off of Vernor.

Other land uses

Staff and residents discussed other hopeful ideas for land uses within the Vista area including farmer's markets, greening initiatives, soccer fields, butterfly gardens and even a miniature golf course.

- Matt: working on a lot at the corner of 25th and Bagley, badminton nets, picnic table, garden beds; looking to expand garden beds this year; space will be open to the public
- Repair the World: vertical gardens in the alley way, fill alley in with gravel, open up and connect to the gazebo space
- Lots along Vernor on the east side of I-75, what sites would be the best for mass plantings, flower mounds, and adding a green aesthetic? Looking to create a possible corridor between the train station and W. Grand Blvd
- Another idea: create a 3 on 3 miniature soccer field by the municipal building?
- Butterfly gardens; monarchs weigh stations—milkweed gardens; provides ecological preservation—pollination and migration
- Detroit Farm & Garden area: small scale farmer's market; the area had a market at one time around Cinco de Mayo—would be cool to revive history of the area
- Small scale farmer's market: one or two days per week? Have music, arts, food trucks—people bring their own tents, don't feel overwhelmed like at Eastern Market, a place for people to go
- Miniature golf course

The Next Vista Partnership Community Meeting

We have not picked an exact date—will probably after the next community meeting which will take place on Thursday April 16th.