

# Vista Partnership: Safety & Blight Work Group - meeting II

1.28.2015 – 5:40pm

*“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 Wednesday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, Vista staff and residents convened for the second meeting of the Safety and Blight work group. During this meeting, residents and staff discussed various topics including: lighting updates for 48216 since last meeting, possible other group projects, a youth presentation from Urban Neighborhood Initiatives, as well as some other announcements.

## Lighting Updates

Adequate street and building lighting seemed to be one of the most popular topics of safety and blight. The work group discussed the lighting situation between Grand Blvd and 16<sup>th</sup> street along Vernor and Bagley streets, and also discussed the overall lighting situation of Southwest Detroit. People have been wondering why the main commercial corridors of Vernor and Bagley in the Hubbard-Richard neighborhood have been dark.

Vista staff had attempted to contact lighting personnel including DTE and the Public Lighting Authority with no success. Rico Razo, District 6 manager from the Mayor’s office had met with Vista staff and gave some lighting updates. The 48216 area code, where the Vista development area resides, is supposed to receive full lighting service within the next 6-8 months in 2015.

What Vista staff and members do know is that according to the PLA, all non-working street lights are replacing their old high pressure sodium bulbs with new LED efficient bulbs. One new, working street light will replace two, old, non-working street lights. Also, alley lights will be discontinued when the lights stop working or the bulbs burn out. Residents will have the option of paying for the light service in the alley if so desired.

A resident shared her story about how DTE actually came to her house and replaced every single light-bulb in her home with high efficiency, compact fluorescent light bulbs for free, with no strings attached. She found out about this program after she went to the DTE office and a worker had explained it to her.

## Possible Projects

Because the lighting authority has already used engineers to assess the lighting conditions of 48216 and the Vista development area, the district manager suggested that energy for lighting assessments might be better used in a different format. Safety & blight work group members had previously discussed doing a possible porch light campaign. A porch light campaign could consist of volunteers going door to door in the Hubbard-Richard neighborhood.

## Other potential projects

- "Broom brigade"
  - o Regularly scheduled street and sidewalk sweeping with local residents
  - o Have to start somewhere and get the ball rolling
  - o This can be announced in the spring at the next large, community meeting
- Walkability assessment
  - o Based on 5 categories: condition of surface, slope, lighting, vegetation and handicapped accessibility
- Neighborhood Beautification Day (June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015)
  - o Meetings will start on Wednesdays, looking for people to lead sites
  - o Looking to select 2-3 locations within the Vista development area to do a one day beautification project with volunteers. This could be green space, clean-up, painting, garden beds, etc.
  - o Asking meeting-goers to be thinking about places to select
  - o Possible area: northwest corner of Vernor and I-75
  - o How can we engage youth to make them a part of this process?
- Private security assessment
  - o How many private and publicly owned establishments in the Vista development area are requiring private security?
  - o How much is being spent at each place, and in total on private security?
  - o Is there a collaborative strategy possible

## Youth Presentation – Urban Neighborhood Initiatives

Vista staff has been in contact with Urban Neighborhood Initiatives regarding their own lighting assessment project led by youth in their Youth Advisory Board (YAB) in the Springwells neighborhood of Southwest Detroit. The YAB implemented their own porch light campaign to assess the status of exterior lighting on people's homes.

After some conversation, U.N.I staff agreed to let their YAB come and present their processes, results and successes with their own lighting initiatives for residents and stakeholders near the Vista development area. The presentation is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm.

## Abandoned buildings & arson

Blighted buildings have huge impacts on the stability of neighborhoods and permanent residency status of families. A resident mentioned that the threat of arson towards abandoned properties puts families at major risk of displacement because their homes next door can catch fire.

The city should have a higher priority on demolishing structures that are very near intact and non-vacant structures. Southwest Detroit has seen a few families this past year displaced from their homes because of fires burning multiple homes on the same block at the same time.

Vista staff asked resident to submit a short list of possible buildings he knows of that are in that category, and we can pass the information along to see if those buildings are either scheduled for demolishing, or can be put on that list for demolishing.

## **Other Announcements**

### **“Ten Principles of Rebuilding Urban Retail”**

- How do we get business back in to the area?
- Research and reading material from the *Urban Land Institute*, passed out to work group and very briefly discussed (worth revisiting)

### **Congress of Communities**

- Update from resident/business owner from CoC Safety Alliance meeting:
  - o A delay on lighting; no lights on Vernor near Lawndale, or on Dix
  - o Supposedly Vernor is considered a “state highway” and not a city road? Maybe slowing progress
  - o CoC covers safety issues from Patton Park to Junction, not beyond that
- Vista staff is meeting with Congress of Communities staff to see if there are points of connection or collaboration when it comes to blight and safety issues.

### **Police & Political presence**

- Police officers will be invited to the next Vista community meeting in April
- Both District 6 Councilwoman, Raquel Castaneda-Lopez and State Representative Stephanie Chang will be invited to the next community meeting

### **Service Tire Building**

- Residents and business owners have mentioned that the old Service Tire building on W. Vernor between St. Anne and 20<sup>th</sup> street has been painted to cover up excessive graffiti
- Mayor’s office has been cracking down on graffiti and owners of dilapidated commercial buildings

### **CompStats (Wayne State University)**

- We will ask the precinct for the data on the Vista Partnership area
- Renewed effort to gather data on crime in other parts of SW Detroit

### **State of the City Address**

- February 10<sup>th</sup> at 4pm

## **Next Scheduled Meeting**

Tentatively, Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, 1920 25<sup>th</sup> street, Lithuanian Hall, Detroit.