

College/Seminary Focus Area Task Force
Meeting Notes for May 9, 2007 Meeting

Discussion at the meeting centered around establishing action steps to accompany each of the goals to be included in the plan.

Upgrade Public Improvements

Ald. Bell indicated that there is some give and take among aldermen for money for local streets when there are major projects going on in a ward, such as the Morgan Street bridge and rebuilding of Kishwaukee Street in his ward. He asked that the group create a priority list for him of streets within this neighborhood. He will refer to that in making his requests for road improvements in the Fifth Ward.

Action steps to include

- ◆ Repaving __ blocks of streets each year, priorities to be determined based on pavement condition and neighborhood input to the alderman of the ward.
- ◆ Install _ blocks of sidewalks each year.
- ◆ Repair/replace/install __ blocks of curb and gutter each year.
- ◆ Improve safety at Baker and Seminary.
 - ◆ Short-term – new signage
 - ◆ Long-term – to be determined by Public Works, implemented by 2011.
- ◆ Improve street lighting, preferably with poles that will hold hanging baskets
 - ◆ Step 1 – inventory what is there
 - ◆ Step 2 – work with Public Works and the alderman of the ward to determine what is needed and plan for improvements
 - ◆ Step 3 – implement planned improvements
- ◆ Work with the Rockford School District to resolve drainage problems on the Kishwaukee School site.

Improve Safety and Security

- ◆ Work with the Rockford Police Department to achieve crime prevention through environmental design throughout the neighborhood.
- ◆ Complete the swift demolition of boarded up buildings, thereby removing attractive nuisances from the neighborhood.
- ◆ Pursue designation as a Weed & Seed neighborhood.
 - ◆ Complete the application process by the end of 2008.
 - ◆ Implement plans included in the Weed & Seed program
- ◆ Celebrate National Night Out annually.

Bring New Retail to the Neighborhood

Comments from Reid Montgomery and Jim Johnson:

- ◆ Several factors play into making this neighborhood more appealing to retailers. Major changes planned for the area will have a significant impact – removal of the Jane Addams development, construction of the Morgan Street bridge and the approaches to it, and development of the whitewater park and suitable uses around it on the City-owned Ingersoll site.
- ◆ Having very affordable housing prices is both a plus and a minus.
- ◆ Increasing home ownership levels will strengthen the neighborhood.

- ◆ Anything you can do to make the neighborhood more attractive to retailers, both aesthetically and financially, helps.
- ◆ College/Seminary is a neighborhood on the verge of rebounding. Understand that this can take a long time to achieve. The ability to attract new retail businesses into an area is driven by how much money they can make. Every business has its price point, and this is what determines what type of retail you attract. Once there are significant visible changes, primarily removal of Jane Addams, the neighborhood should target good quality local entrepreneurs. Residential dollars drive retail.

Actions to be taken:

- ◆ ORCHiD will continue with the promotional materials it already produces.
- ◆ ORCHiD, with some technical assistance from City staff, will produce marketing materials to attract retail business to the area.
- ◆ Make the area more attractive to retailers by fixing up residential properties. Options to consider:
 - ◆ ORCHiD could buy homes, fix them up, then sell them to new owner occupants.
 - ◆ ORCHiD and neighborhood volunteers could help seniors with minor repairs to their property.
 - ◆ Work with groups such as Heartland Church to bring volunteers into the neighborhood.
 - ◆ Continue with annual neighborhood cleanups.

Establish a Community Center and Community Garden(s)

- ◆ Establish an ORCHiD community center that can serve as a meeting place and resource center for the neighborhood.
 - ◆ Identify a property that will work and that ORCHiD can afford to buy and rehab. (2007)
 - ◆ Purchase the property, plan improvements, get necessary permits and approvals from the City. (2007)
 - ◆ Complete rehab of the building and begin operation. (2008)
- ◆ Establish one or more community gardens on City-owned vacant parcels.
 - ◆ Determine locations annually.
 - ◆ Set basic ground rules for how space is allotted in each garden to whom, how each garden will be watered, and how each parcel will be maintained overall (such as cutting weeds around the perimeter of each garden).
 - ◆ Start implementation in 2007 if possible, in 2008 for sure.

Make the Neighborhood a Safe Place for Kids

Comments from Steve Anderson about Brewington Oaks: RHA plans to renovate the apartments here, enlarging at least some of them to make them more appealing to newer seniors. The goal is to return the towers to their original purpose, providing housing for elderly and for individuals with disabilities. They have to de-densify here – there are too many apartments there for what's needed in this area. They would like to revamp the area through a HOPE VI project that would bring in new retail and new residential construction.

- ◆ Rockford Park District programs/projects:
 - ◆ Reseal and coat the basketball courts in Nelson Park. (2007)
 - ◆ Find ways to bring organized events to Nelson Park.
 - ◆ Take steps to begin implementation of the Keith Creek Greenway plan.
 - ◆ ORCHiD will take greater advantage of the Park District's opportunities for neighborhood programming.
-

Next Meeting

Wednesday, June 13th at 5:30 PM
Jane Addams Community Center

Work to be covered

- ◆ Check City-owned parcels for possible garden spots
- ◆ Complete action steps for the remaining goals – investment in neighborhood properties, property standards, and redevelopment of the Ingersoll site.