

**Meeting of the
HOPE VI Focus Area Task Force
December 7, 2006**

Task Force members present Barb Baptista una Freund (RPD), Kerry Knodle (CCS), Reid Montgomery (City of Rockford), Kathy Ricotta (Habitat for Humanity), Pearl Hawks (Winn Co Board, Lisa Brown (RMTD)

City staff present Vicki Manson, Wayne Dust, Aaron Rucker (CD); Kevin Ciabatti (Building); Kim Binder (Police)

Other interested parties Maurice Redd (SWIFTT) and Barbara Sjostrom (Health Systems Research)

Surveys

Following introductions, Barbara Sjostrom explained that 2,200 surveys being done by the Park District in the HOPE VI area had been mailed mid November. So far 179 (8%) had been returned. Two days ago a second mailing was sent out. Also, residents at Concord Commons just received their surveys.

Barb Baptista una Freund explained that the Park District held a luncheon for residents in the area (mid November) to provide input but it was not well attended. Pearl Hawks suggested that another gathering for residents be scheduled in the evening to achieve better attendance. Ms. Hawks also stated that most of the residents using Washington Park facilities are from Concord Commons and now that they have the surveys hopefully more responses will be received.

Focus Area Assets

Aaron brought a map of the HOPE VI area with community asset points indicated. Aaron discussed initial assets and members included additional assets to be listed on the map i.e. churches, infrastructure, existing plans, US EPA grant and remediation, educational outlets, and public services. Lisa Brown (RMTD) illustrated current bus routes and mentioned possible new bus routes serving the residents in the future. Also, 20 buses will be installed with bike racks in Spring 2007. Further, Ms. Brown added that the redesign of West State Street greenspace/landscaping buffer should provide access for residents to easily get to a bus stop located on State Street. RMTD is also discussing with the Lowe's Distribution Center the need for a bus route.

Reid Montgomery mentioned that Starr Development is considering incorporating retail along with high-rise multifamily for the redevelopment of Concord Commons. Barbara Sjostrom added that of the 179 surveys received, residents are responding that a grocery store is needed. Discussion also included the possibility of a grocery store at Meridian Road and State Street.

Vicki Manson explained that up to \$25,000 exists per household for renovation and residential demolition money (\$285,000 citywide total) is available.

Large retailers in the area i.e. Farm & Fleet and Lowe's should be considered assets. A comment was raised to ensure that bus routes serve these retailers.

SWIFTT is trying to engage neighborhood organizations. Ms. Hawks added that Orchard Park is the neighborhood watch for Concord Commons.

Assignments for Next Meeting

Kerry suggested a business status report be done along West State Street describing what's there and whether business-clustering potential exists. Wayne offered to have a consultant working on the US EPA grant provide this information in the upcoming months. Barb asked if monthly status reports of this information could be shared and Wayne agreed.

Kim Binder volunteered to providing information on known neighborhood organizations.

Kevin Ciabatti offered to compile building permit data and possibly violation data.

At some point soon, representatives on the task force should be providing any plans or strategies involving HOPE VI improvements.

Announcements

Aaron is leaving the City for a senior planner position at the City of North Myrtle Beach, SC. His last day is December 14th. Good luck!!

Barb Baptista una Freund is moving her office and staff to Washington Park. Full move should occur by January 2007.

Meeting Schedule

Next meeting is Wednesday, January 10th at 6 PM at Washington Park. Thereafter, all meetings will take place on the first Wednesday of the month at 6 PM. Meeting locations to be determined in the future.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.