

MEETING MINUTES - Revitalizing Neighborhoods Committee 12/16/08

I. Call to Order/Introductions

Present: Paul Haan, Christine Helms-Maletic, Gail Heffner, Ben Stehouwer, Russ Lewis, Tom Bulten, Kevin Wessilink, Carol Townsend, Mike Williams, Kim VanDyke

Paul called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

II. Zoning Project Update

A. PPT @ NOBL & SWAN

Carol and Tom are presenting at NOBL on January 13 and Frank is doing SWAN on January 15, if anyone who is planning to present in the future would like to come to see either presentation, they are welcome. After these presentations, eight more will need to be completed to fulfill the Dyer Ives grant agreement.

B. TN Brochure

The Traditional Neighborhoods brochure content has been finalized and resubmitted to the Planning Department for printing.

C. Second Workshop

The second of three workshops is going to be targeted specifically toward community organizers & neighborhood association staff. The agenda is being developed by the Zoning Project subcommittee and will include distribution of a full copy of the Ordinance, neighborhood maps & lunch. Planning staff will be there to take questions and to get feedback from staff about how the code is working (or not) in their respective neighborhoods.

The first workshop on signs was very successful, with about 20 participants. The third will focus on advocacy and citizen participation.

III. Neighborhood Indicators Project

A. Review of Measures & Methods

Kevin, Jill & Carol met as a subcommittee to assign measures to each indicator (see handout). Most measures could be conducted bi-annually, perhaps staggering the collection so as not to overwhelm the organization with work at a particular time. A column for each indicator should be added to suggest how often the particular data is to be collected. Also, the methods/measures should be flexible and allow for change over time.

The question was raised as to how "neighborhood" would be defined. Some ideas were to let census blocks determine boundaries; to leave the decision to the client organization; to use a pre-determined radius with consideration to natural boundaries (highways, river, railroads, etc.); and to use a particular business district, school or other entity as a center point.

Comments on the measures were as follows:

- I. Add indicator "Quality neighborhood school within an 8 block radius of each resident."

- I. Add an indicator which reflects the tenure of tenancy/ownership for both rental and owner-occupied residential properties, which should match city or county turnover rates. Census data could be used.
- II. "Racial composition" should be re-assigned to #V. Each neighborhood client should decide how to measure this indicator, i.e. by block, census block, etc.
- II. Frank should give us some input on the accessible housing indicator: there is a difference between "accessible" and "certifiable" Zero Step requirements.
- II. Change the rental housing indicator measure to "an average which is in line with the rest of the city."
- III. Redevelopment around transit corridor measures should also include commercial properties, plus a measure of the amount of money invested per development. Also, change 1/2 mile to 1/4 mile on that same indicator's method.
- III. Kevin will talk to Jay Hoekstra about measures/methods for the complete streets indicator.
- III. Car dependency could be measured using the Secretary of State's data on licenses and/or automobile registrations per household per block.
- IV. Change green space measure to households within 1/4 mile (from 1/2 mile) of a park or natural area. This would bring it into line with Green Grand Rapids standards.
- IV. Native habitat measurement could be conducted by Calvin College's biology department or by a local Audubon chapter.
- IV. Street canopy measures should be the same as Green GR standards. They should also reflect the varieties of trees and whether the trees are mature or young. WMEAC could help with methodology here.
- V. Citizen-based organizations need to be defined better (501c3? Formalized?) Dyer-Ives has a database which might be useful for collecting this information.
- V. Neighborhood businesses that are locally-owned could be defined by whatever criteria Local First uses.

B. Practicum Students

Dyer Ives has indicated a willingness to fund a group of MSU Urban Planning Practicum students to run a pilot of this program in a GR neighborhood. Carol will be drawing up a proposal to pay for the students (\$2,500) plus her time in the project. Committee members should email further suggestions for indicators or measurement to Carol.

V. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:07.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Helms-Maletic
Secretary