

Neighborhood Task Force

March 20, 2008

Notes from Open House

Member Attendance:

Chuck Bennett
Dan Dorn
Levi Herrera
Don Homuth
John Lattimer

Dave MacMillan
Rick Massey
Brad Nanke
Pamela Schmidling
John Shepard

Sam Skillern
Thomas Smith
Kate Tarter
Laura Tester

Staff Attendance:

Jan Calvin, Neighborhood and Community Services Manager
Debbie Kees, Staff Assistant

Guests:

Linda Haglund
Neil Sherwood
Darlene Strozut

Preliminary Recommendations

Calvin presented an overview of the evening: an explanation of the Task Force, its activities, and its preliminary recommendations, with input from the guests. The presentation included background on the Task Force, including its 2008 charge from the City Council. She also highlighted progress to date by Council and staff on the 2007 recommendations. A handout was provided, summarizing this information.

The preliminary recommendations being discussed this evening were presented, featuring land use, marketing neighborhood associations, and other issues.

Regarding preliminary recommendation #1, NAs choosing whether to increase notification for a land use proposal, Schmidling wondered whether there would be enough time for this to happen, since land use applications must adhere to deadlines set by code. She also asked whether the NA chairperson would be able to determine which neighbors would be the best ones to notify about a proposal. Calvin agreed that the timing issues need to be further discussed, as well as decision-making processes involved. Homuth noted that, because the developers are provided with information early in the process, this will help NAs to become informed and share information more easily.

Linda Haglund wondered whether a chairperson would be held liable for such decisions, but Tarter declared that the City is liable for adhering to code regarding notification; a neighborhood association would not be. Nanke added that the intent is outreach; the land use application is, after all, public information available to anyone.

Schmidling was concerned about the funding identified in the recommendation that permits NAs to mail notices. She asked where the money would come from, if it would be dedicated to this purpose alone, and if the NAs could be confident it would continue from year to year. Calvin stated that any funds to be allotted for this purpose would be available only for this purpose.

Regarding recommendation #4, notification format and content, Skillern noted that the Task Force had indicated to include on the notification the contact information for the pertinent neighborhood

association as well as staff and developer contact information. Calvin agreed that the recommendation would be reworded to include that stipulation.

Regarding recommendation #7, the land use application checklist, Haglund asked how Council would view the response provided by the developer about meeting with the neighborhood association. Nanke said that, as a Councilor, he would ask the developers whether they met with pertinent neighborhood associations and, if not, why not. If they had met with the NAs, he would also ask what happened at that meeting. NAs would also have the opportunity to present their viewpoint of the interaction with a developer. Haglund noted that a developer's representative at a neighborhood meeting may not have the authority to answer the neighbors' questions effectively, so Council may think more happened at the meeting than actually took place.

Skilern noted that, while the recommendation does not make meeting with a neighborhood association mandatory, this can be recommended and encouraged. The point is to build a culture of collaboration, an expectation from all parties of the way to do business. This is a step in the right direction. Developers will learn how to work with associations, and NAs will learn how to work with developers.

Regarding recommendation #13, marketing tools, Shepard noted that the idea was for the City to provide standard tools that could be customized to a specific association. Calvin agreed, noting that the recommendation would be altered to include that stipulation.

Regarding recommendation #16, cultural competency, Herrera stated that just having the message out there would go a long way in the community toward building rapport.

Tarter wondered whether, since we're not prepared to recommend specific improvements, staff could put together information so the Task Force is ready to address this issue when they reconvene next year. Perhaps setting up a subcommittee would be a good idea. Nanke agreed that there needs to be some movement toward the solution now, even if the steps taken are small.

Skilern advised making sure the process of identifying challenges and opportunities NAs face in connecting cultures includes people from the target cultures. Tarter said to look at the issue from both sides: what are they looking for, and what are NAs looking for. Calvin proposed looking for groups which already have relationships NAs can benefit from, expanding the network instead of recreating the wheel.

At the close of the presentation, Tarter asked why the notion of flex teams had not been included in the list of preliminary recommendations. Calvin answered that that issue had not been decided by the Task Force yet and, in fact, was scheduled to be discussed at the March 25 meeting.

Calvin invited the attendees to respond further to the preliminary recommendations, to capture the discussion in writing, in order to ensure their voices were heard. Large posters, one for each of the recommendations, were available for this purpose.

Calvin also noted that the recommendations will be presented to the Planning Commission, and one thing the NTF might ask is for input on what they expect from interaction between an NA and a developer. In response to a question, she added that specifics from the Task Force would help when staff produce the report to City Council for the public hearing.