

Southwest Partnership

Barre Circle + Franklin Square + Hollins Roundhouse
+ Pigtown + Poppleton + Union Square + Mount Clare

Southwest Partnership
Housing Committee Meeting
May 14th, 2015
7pm, Neighborhood Design Center

Present

Anne Ames
John Bullock
Peter Duvall
Christina Engelmann
Diana Geiss
Edith Gilliard-Canty
Roshelle Kades
Haeng Hyuan Kim
Maurice Mayo
Bill Marker
Nancy McCormick
Larry Nelson
Lou Packett
Jamie Pitts (Chair)
Katie Schroeder
Zarva Taru
Rason Taru
Elizabeth Weber

I. Live Baltimore and Realtor Happy Hour Review

Realtor Happy Hour: three realtors were in attendance. The timing was unfortunate with current events in Baltimore, but Mi Ranchito enjoyed hosting it. The Committee will need to continue to keep building relationships with area realtors. Suggestion to have a survey sent out to attendees asking what they thought —both to the realtors and the neighborhood attendees.

Live Baltimore (Katie Schroeder): The morning event was held at Edmonson-Westside High School. The Southwest Partnership was in attendance with a table, as were Pigtown, Hollins Roundhouse, Union Square, and Franklin Square. The neighborhoods and the SWP had their own wing of the hall next to the sign ups for the tour of the Southwest Partnership area. There were over 200 people in attendance, with the same pattern of registration as in previous years. Live Baltimore thought it was a great event with a lot of great press. A question was asked about charging attendees—Live Baltimore has found that since they have started charging an entrance fee the number of attendees has gone down but more people who attend are ready to buy homes.

The tour of the SWP area was based out of the Mount Clare Mansion and featured homes in Pigtown, Barre Circle, and Hollins Roundhouse. There were 20 people on the bus tour, and quite a few who drove themselves.

The SWP table seemed to have more residents than other tables—Live Baltimore invites community groups with paid staff, counseling agencies, and volunteer-based groups. Union Square gave out trees in bags, cookies, and their newsletter, which seemed very successful. The most effective type of material handed out seems to be updated listings of homes, map of an area's location in Baltimore City, postcard take-aways, and coupons of local businesses. The typical customer at Live Baltimore events is an African-American who is between the ages of 25 and 34, is single, and is a working professional.

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Volunteers got feedback that it would have been good to have a more comprehensive list of homes available for sale—the list at the event was for homes that fit the needs of the Live Baltimore event, but it would have been good to have a list of available homes that could be sorted by price etc and would meet the needs of homebuyers, investors, people interested in rehab, and so on. Such a list would have to be fluid and easily updated, and would have to be developed with the assistance of area realtors. Neighborhood associations could be asked to reach out to realtors they know in their neighborhoods.

II. Housing Committee Priority Setting

All committees have been asked to choose one or two goals that are measurable, accomplishable, addresses the Vision Plan. Each committee member was asked to briefly, in two or three words, identify now items in the Vision Plan that they thought should be the priority for the housing committee for the year. These included:

1. Vacant Houses
2. Derelict Homes (vacant or not)
3. Prevent resident displacement (short term but only item that keeps current residents in their homes)
4. Dual—vacant housing and market rate housing at MLK and Washington Blvd.
5. Marketing available houses/blocks in each neighborhood (vacant and derelict houses)
6. dumping of trash (vacant, derelict houses)

The committee decided that addressing vacant houses would be the best priority for the year—they most common across responses and one that addresses other issues.

Peter Duvall, from the Greater Homewood Community Corporation talked about how he works on vacant housing in GHCC's area of north-central Baltimore. They have a database (which needs to be a database rather than an excel spreadsheet) which is updated regularly. Code enforcement takes a long time so they need to follow a property for years. The City has a storehouse of information online at baltimorecityhousing/cels which is about 80-90% accurate. GHCC uses the database to contact the code enforcement attorney a few times a year to give a list of key properties (identified by the community) that they want an update on.

The Committee had concerns about using code enforcement on vulnerable residents or occupied houses—GHCC's neighborhoods focus on vacant houses, not displacing people.

The Southwest Partnership could develop its own database with its own categories (including for example, officially vacant but occupied) and each neighborhood could determine its own target properties.

The database, and the process of investigation to complete the database could also be used to identify residents who could be connected with resources to improve the standard of their housing. A concern was raised that doing so would open them to code enforcement issues and pressures, but according to Peter Duvall that doesn't happen unless the home is discovered to be un-liveable. Generally un-updated houses are not taken by the city as code enforcement violations—tend to do exterior, furnace and roofs.

Addressing vacant houses are a priority. Community members can get information on vacant houses to Jamie and the SWP staff, and the goal is to have the database completed by the end of the summer. Jane B. has some information from past work—Elizabeth will contact her to see if she has the information. Peter Duvall offered support on how to build a database and how to use it for Code Enforcement.

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Bill Marker--Barre Circle may not have many vacant houses—would it make sense to think of a secondary project that would also impact Barre Circle, such as market rate senior housing? (Is a part of the Pigtown Mainstreet Plan)

Anne Ames—with the riots, Mount Clare did a priority list of their issues (drug trade, prostitution, vacant houses, trash). Mount Clare is considered safe, livable, has fewer vacant houses twenty years ago. Quality of life issues are really important. Schools etc. Important to have jobs for people in the neighborhood.

Roshelle—concerned about targeted code enforcement on individuals would it make sense to work instead on community engagement so people understand their rights? The database can have categories (code enforcement etc) and the neighborhood associations will look at the database and determine their priorities and concerns.

The Commercial Development and Education and Workforce Development Committee looking at schools and training for jobs, and other committees address other quality of life issues, but quality of life issues are at some level housing issues—will all have to come back to the database looking at which houses are vacant and the Housing Committee may have to be involved in addressing them.

Deadline for the database—September 1, need to get an idea of what format material needs to be in (from the GHCC list).

IV. Marketing Plan: Jamie would like to ask the Board send out a proposal for a professional marketing companies for marketing materials. Preservation and Promotion Committee has also been working on it. Information should come from the Committee and the communities.

V. Code Enforcement—it would make sense to develop a pitch to the law school to develop educational materials on code enforcement, especially targeted towards landlords and renters. It would also be a way to make sure that people are also connected with tenant rights resources. Also need to develop outreach programs for tenants.

VI. Live Near Your Work—UMB and Bon Secours are looking to expand into a rent near your work program—also giving incentives to people who currently live in the area. Bon Secours almost has a grant to expand their programs. Current programs are not very successful, but the program in Detroit that the adapted programs are based on is highly successful.

VII. Southwest Partnership Update—Michael Seipp new Executive Director, will be fully on board June 9th.

VIII. Neighborhood Updates--Franklin Square Beautification Grant—will improve the outside appearance of a block of vacant houses and improve the green space behind the block.