



**HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOOD FORCE MEETING SUMMARY
SUMMARY FOR MEETING #1 – WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2024 – 5:30PM-6:30PM
ROBERTO CLEMENTE – 360 COLUMBUS AVENUE, NEW HAVEN, CT**

MEETING PURPOSE

To clarify the Housing & Neighborhood Task Force’s role in the Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) planning process, discuss organizational and administrative structure of the task force, outline the next steps in the process, and review planning handbook and baseline housing data.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Gayatri Rana, LaToya Mills, Edward LaChance, Alecia Spencer(v), Linda Cross(v), Jeffrey Walker(v), Dawn Henning, Liz Torres, Rosaly Rosario, Esther Rose-Wilson, Jeffrey Moreno, Mark Wilson, Ken Boroson, Kate Aufhauser, Michaela Mahon, David Stembel, Troy McGhee

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Shenae Draughn, Gus Keach-Longo, Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Garrett Sheehan, Laura Brown, Sarah McIver, Doris Doward, Alder Carmen Rodriguez, Doug Housladen, Jasmine Sanderrs, Elisa Halsey, Sean Matteson, Giovanni Zinn, Dolores Colon, Arlevia Samuels, Pam Monk-Kelley

OTHERS PRESENT

Francisco Catala, Lynn Walters, Shirley Grice, Alberta Golden, Alvin Hunter, Serene Neal-Sanjurjo, Vincencia Adusei

-PRESENTATION MATERIALS ARE ATTACHED TO THIS DOCUMENT-

1. Welcome

Ms. Vincent, Program Manager, welcomed attendees and led introductions. Ms. Vincent is the Project Manager of the Glendower Group. She stated that Elm City Communities (ECC) and The Glendower Group, and the consultants put together a team that will provide support to the task force. However, the heavy lifting is in the member’s responsibility. She added that CNI will make a difference. Ms. Vincent reviewed the agenda, which she planned to move through quickly, yet efficiently to ensure everyone’s time is respected.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the task force members is to commit to the CNI process, actively participate in meetings and be an ambassador and champion of the CNI process. The purpose of the task force is to prepare the housing and neighborhood plan component. Ms. Vincent stated that the task force will not just talk challenges and solutions, but identify tangible outcomes that will be incorporated into the plan to transform the community. This component aims to transform the existing older neighborhood into a neighborhood where people choose to live that is safe, connected to the city and region, and has high quality amenities.



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3. Task Force Scope

Overview of the Process

Ms. Vincent stated that CNI is a revitalization planning process sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It is a program designed to transform neighborhoods. HUD expanded its previous program – called HOPE VI – to transform lives, not just homes. There are three categories that are addressed through the planning process: housing, people, and neighborhood. The people task force will address such topics as health, education, supportive services, jobs, and youth. Ms. Vincent added that the planning process will be centered on the redevelopment of Robert T. Wolfe.

Ms. Vincent identified the neighborhood boundary and explained that the area is the one with the greatest need, but also the area of greatest opportunity. She then explained the stages of the planning process: Mobilize, Understand, Imagine, Shape, Fine Tune, and Nurture. The City is currently in the early part of the Mobilize stage, gathering information. The next stage of the process will be the Understand phase. The main output of the Understand stage is preparing and administering a detailed needs assessment or household survey. The task forces will be instrumental in developing the questions for the needs assessment with Yale school of Management. Ultimately, information from the needs assessment will help shape the Transformation Plan.

4. Let's Get Started

Neighborhood Planning Handbook

The Neighborhood Planning Handbook will be distributed to attendees along with a people baseline data sheet. The handbook is designed to walk CNI participants through the steps of the planning process of transforming an existing community into a neighborhood where people choose to live. The task force members were asked to review and become familiar with the information and bring it to future meetings for reference.

Baseline Data

Key points from the people baseline data for the Union Square Choice Neighborhood:

- There are many community assets, including almost a dozen churches in the area.
- Approximately 23 percent of area residents did not complete high school; this is more than twice the number for the city as a whole.

Ms. Vincent noted that while the hand out shows that there is a lot of data on hand regarding the various categories that the task force will discuss, we will need more neighborhood-specific information. That will come from the neighborhood assessment. Examples include health and education.



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Question Matrix

The task force reviewed the questions that will assist the team in developing the housing and neighborhood component of the transformation plan as well as identifying some questions for the needs assessment. The following is a summary of the initial goals, challenges and strategies discussed around one aspect of the housing and neighborhood component. These are initial goals, challenges, and strategies that will continue to be discussed, and may change as the process moves along.

Goal: Ensure the safety of Children

o Challenges:

- i. Bus stops: The location of bus stops was cited as one particular problem.
- ii. Transportation was noted as a challenge with children attending so many different schools out of the immediate neighborhood.
- iii. Parental consent is often difficult to obtain for after-school programs.

o Strategies

- i. Seniors could be called upon to watch kids after school
- ii. Catchment area or safe zones could be established
- iii. After School Programs could be enhanced – Compile a database of available programs and make accessible to community. Also review programs to identify and fill programmatic gaps.
- iv. Daycare programs: Some daycare programs are not licensed. Consider establishing a mentoring / training program to help improve these facilities and possibly help get them licensed.
- v. Change school hours to limit time after school that children are home alone
- vi. Increase the number of local neighborhood schools to reduce the number of children that have to be bussed out of the neighborhood. This creates a host of challenges such as a lack of parental involvement.
- vii. Organizing a mobile unit or day where transit reps come to Union Square to sign students up for the Student Freedom pass program with CT Transit that provides free transportation on all modes of transit in the CT Transit network.

Goal: Improve the lighting on all neighborhood streets not just major thoroughfares.

o Challenges:

- i. Many streets are not well lit and can lead to crime or sense of fear.
- ii. Trees and shrubs are overgrown and block available lighting.



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o Strategies:

- i. Bulb replacement program: The city apparently has a plan to replace the lights with energy efficient bulbs. Obtain the Lighting Replacement Plan and also review existing lighting plan for gaps.
- ii. Consider a Walkshop to identify particularly dark pockets of the neighborhood.
- iii. Focus on beautification & maintenance, with an emphasis on trimming, replacing, and removing trees where appropriate.
- iv. Illuminate street signs

• Goal: Improve safety / visibility / frequency of safe crosswalks

o Strategies:

- i. Obtain/review data about accidents at crosswalks.
- ii. Review existing bus stops for safety and accessibility and recommend changes accordingly.
- iii. Continue to enforce “Don’t Block the Box” program.
- iv. Locate services closest to where intended customers live and work

• Goal: Introduce traffic calming measures to reduce speeding

o Strategies:

- i. Review Orientation of Streets – so many one ways promote speeding
- ii. Consider bump outs and well-marked cross walks to calm traffic

Communications

Task Force members were introduced to the Union Square Choice Neighborhood website (www.unionsquarechoice.com) as a tool to stay informed about the process.

Task force members suggested additional outreach methods:

- Develop the leadership institute and develop local leaders that can conduct “house” chats
- Work with local organizations to build trust and get the word out
- Use Facebook and email

5. Questions

There were no questions.

6. Next Meeting



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The next meeting date and time will be determined. We want to make sure we have substantial documentation to review and discuss.