

## **Summary of Steering Committee Meeting 1/23/25:**

Bill Villano, Andrew Orefice, Alice Forrester, Chris DiStasi, Michala Seales, Candacia Wright, Jenn Bayer, Jennifer Ricker, Carmen Rodriguez, Mike Carter, Tameka Miller, Ann Harrison, Arleva Samuel, Gus Keach Longo, Lucas Voelkner, Thomasina Shaw, Eliza Halsey, Emily Burne, Mark Wilson, Kymbel Branch, Mike Piscitelli, Doug Hausladen, Steve Winter, Amos Smith, Brian Wnek, Latoya Mills, Haley Vincent, Ken Boronson, Christina Musante, David Stembel, Michala Mahon.

### **Overview**

Haley Vincent-Simpson opened the meeting by recognizing the contributions of participants in developing the Transformation Plan, which is set for submission to HUD by February. She provided an overview of the agenda, emphasizing the importance of feedback on the draft plan available on the Union Square Choice website in two spots: [Union Square Choice](#) – under Updates and Progress or scroll down on the home page under Milestones. Alder Carmen Rodriguez requested that the draft be emailed to those unable to access the website, to which Haley agreed. Following this, roll call was conducted, and participants introduced themselves, representing a diverse array of organizations involved in community development and health initiatives.

The discussion then shifted to the development of the People Plan, which aims to improve access to services, economic health, and educational outcomes for residents. Key community needs identified include affordable food, better school performance, and job opportunities. Strategies proposed include enhancing K-12 education, increasing access to early childhood education, and promoting health literacy, with a focus on collaboration with community partners like the Boys and Girls Club and LEAP. The overarching goal is to foster an engaged and thriving community in the Hill and Union Square areas.

Chris DiStasi presented the Neighborhood Plan, which encompasses the Church Street South site and outlines a vision statement along with four strategic goals. **These goals focus on enhancing connectivity and mobility, promoting health and opportunity, supporting local businesses, and increasing affordable housing.** The plan includes actionable items for residents to implement grassroots initiatives and emphasizes the importance of traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures. The aim is to create a vibrant, safe, and sustainable community for all residents, with a strong emphasis on local business support and community engagement.

The meeting concluded with discussions on infrastructure and connectivity improvements, including strategies for flood risk mitigation and enhanced pedestrian and cyclist connectivity. David Stembel highlighted the importance of **green stormwater infrastructure and community-friendly lighting.** Michaela Mahon proposed a central public open space near Union Station to host community events and support local businesses, while also addressing security measures and connections between the hill neighborhood and downtown New Haven. The group engaged in discussions about the specifics of these connections, suggesting the use of visual aids from existing city plans for clarity. **Connection to downtown may be missing.**

### **Topics:**

### **Draft Transformation Plan Overview**

Haley Vincent-Simpson welcomed attendees and expressed gratitude for their hard work on the transformation plan. The meeting aimed to review the draft plan and solicit further feedback, with the goal of submitting it to HUD by February. Participants were informed that the draft is available on the Union Square Choice website for review.

### **Participant Introductions**

This section featured introductions from various participants, including Bill Villano from Workforce Alliance and Andy Orefice from Yale New Haven Health. Michaela Mahon represented Torti Gallas, while David Stembel and Ken Boroson introduced themselves as part of the architectural team. Additional attendees included representatives from Solar Youth, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and the City of New Haven.

### **People Plan and Community Engagement Strategies**

Haley Vincent-Simpson presented the people plan, highlighting the collaborative efforts of community partners in the planning process. The plan aims to address issues such as access to education, healthcare, and affordable food, while also promoting community engagement. Specific strategies include improving K-12 education outcomes and increasing access to healthy food options.

\* Drafting and submission of the transformation plan to HUD

\* Community engagement and feedback mechanisms

### **Overview of the Hill Neighborhood Plan**

Chris DiStasi outlined the Hill neighborhood plan, highlighting its focus on the Church Street South site and broader neighborhood investments. The plan is structured with a vision statement, four goals, and a graphic summarizing strategies. Each goal section includes public engagement data, existing conditions, and actionable items for residents.

### **Connectivity, Health, and Housing Strategies for the Neighborhood**

Chris DiStasi presented a comprehensive plan addressing connectivity, health, business development, and housing in the neighborhood. Key strategies include traffic calming, improved pedestrian amenities, and support for local businesses. The plan also emphasizes the importance of affordable housing and community resources to ensure residents can thrive. Each goal is supported by specific interventions and graphics illustrating potential improvements.

\* Strategies for affordable housing development

### **Community Development and Transformation Planning**

Haley Vincent-Simpson emphasized the need for community partnerships to support youth development and local business initiatives. She outlined strategies including internships, career fairs, and entrepreneurship training, alongside plans for a grocery store and retail incubator spaces. Additionally, she mentioned the importance of adult literacy programs and tailored job training for various demographics.

### **Housing Planning Goals and Strategies**

Kenneth Boroson discussed the engagement process that informed the housing strategies for Union Square, highlighting the community's desire for improved public transportation, parking, and affordable housing. He presented six housing planning goals, which include ensuring the right to return for current residents and enhancing community amenities. Michaela Mahon then introduced the second goal focused on providing diverse and high-quality housing options.

\* Proposed community amenities and services

### **Site Plan and Housing Strategy Overview**

Michaela Mahon from Torti Gallas outlined a site plan master plan aimed at providing diverse housing options that foster a neighborhood atmosphere in New Haven. The design strategy respects the low-density character of the adjacent hill neighborhood while gradually increasing density towards downtown. The plan emphasizes the creation of secure outdoor spaces for residents and the inclusion of modern, high-quality buildings with necessary amenities.

### **Infrastructure and Connectivity Planning**

David Stembel discussed eight major strategies for infrastructure and connectivity improvements, starting with flood mitigation through site elevation and green stormwater solutions. He stressed the need for better pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, improved lighting for safety, and the inclusion of trees to enhance the environment. Additionally, he mentioned the importance of adequate parking design and traffic calming measures to improve safety and accessibility.

\* Safety and connectivity improvements in the neighborhood

### **Community Space and Urban Planning Updates**

Michaela Mahon outlined a proposal for a flexible public open space near Union Station, intended for community events and daily use. The plan also includes play areas for children, community spaces for various programs, and approximately 40,000 to 50,000 square feet of retail space to enhance the area. Haley Vincent-Simpson emphasized the importance of security measures and community engagement in the planning process.

### **Action Items:**

1. Look at creating bridge programs, financial aid, and job training for high school students and low-income individuals.
2. Haley Vincent-Simpson will send the rough draft of the transformation plan to Alder Carmen Rodriguez for distribution to the community.
3. Team will consider adding emergency blue phones and additional security measures to the housing and neighborhood components of the plan.
4. Plan feels solid and well-thought out maybe just emphasize the connection to downtown more.
5. Housing Team should look at rooftop spaces and how we can possibly incorporate those for gardens or convening spaces.

### **Key Questions:**

- \* What strategies are being considered to improve community engagement and participation?
- \* What measures will be taken to ensure pedestrian safety in the neighborhood?

- \* Will there be emergency blue phones similar to those provided around the Yale campus?
- \*A suggestion to give visual that displays the connection to downtown.