



OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER



Date: May 5, 2017

To: Mayor Ardis
City Council Members

From: Patrick Urich
City Manager

Subject: Community Conversation on Race Small Work Group Follow Up

In March 2017, the City convened work group meetings to develop actionable solutions for the Community Conversations on Race in specific areas. The following is a status report that includes a summary of the meeting and the areas of focus coming out of each work group. Some of the work groups still have work to complete, and they will be continuing their meetings this month:

1. Community Conversation – Economic Development

The economic development group, facilitated by Chris Setti and Leslie McKnight, met March 13 at 4 pm at Valeska Hinton School. There were 11 people (apart from staff) in attendance, including one member of Council (Tim Newlin). The group discussed the 95 different ideas that had been generated at the first two conversations, sorted them into 32 larger groupings, then sorted those into short- and long-term projects.

Two economic development short-term projects were prioritized by the group. Below are those two items and some of the work being done or planned in each:

Develop business loans and grants for minority entrepreneurs and develop programs to repair credit.

- Recently, the City of Peoria in conjunction with Peoria County awarded \$15,000 to six minority owned businesses through the M-BIG program. The City is looking to continue that program by soliciting contributions from local banks and other corporations.

- The City revised the rules for its Revolving Loan Fund to increase access to capital. While firms can be loaned \$25,000 per job created, minority owned businesses can be loaned up to \$35,000 per job created.
- In partnership with the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC), the City is launching the www.gpsourcelink.com, an online guide to resources available in the community for starting a business. The resource navigator is a great tool for learning about what exists, but also for determining where gaps in service exist.

The City's Economic Development Department will take the lead in this area.

Create a “Shop Local” strategy for minority-owned businesses.

- The City's Economic Development Department is doing research into existing minority-owned businesses in Peoria.
- The Minority Business Development Center (MBDC) has started a process for creating a directory of minority-owned businesses.
- The Peoria Journal Star has been profiling minority-owned businesses who received an M-BIG grant (Lindsay's Cleaners, Riley's Cupcakes, Reign Construction, Creativity Uncorked).

The MBDC will take the lead in this area.

2. Community Conversation - Infrastructure

The infrastructure group, facilitated by Jane Gerdes, Andrea Klopfenstein, and Shannon Techie met March 13 at 4 pm at the Lincoln Library. There were 12 people (apart from staff) in attendance. The group discussed the various issues surrounding infrastructure. The workgroup wanted to see the City map existing assets and to survey the residents to see what they would want in their neighborhoods. Specifically, issues of better lighting, parks, sidewalks and bus shelters were identified as a priority. The workgroup also wanted to see the city look at policies that would encourage redevelopment.

Community Development and Public Works will continue to take the lead on these issues.

3. Community Conversation – Health

A community conversation on health was held on March 13. The event attracted approximately 16 individuals. The group refined and ranked the health-related input received at the earlier community-wide conversations. The top two selected topics were Health Food Access and Prenatal Care.

Actions Taken to Date:

- **Healthy Food Access** – this focus aligns with several existing community based initiatives in Peoria, including the emerging Urban Agriculture industry and the Invest Health project.
 - The development (and re-development) of land in the urbanized area for agricultural purposes is currently being pursued by various local non-profits (including Gifts in the Moment) and as part of the City CSO / Storm Water solution. There are local examples of urban agriculture areas within the 61605 zip code, and fledgling distribution and educational efforts that link healthy fresh produce to area of Peoria that does not have easy access to grocery stores. The organizations working in the area of urban agriculture and healthy food access are currently developing various business plans that will allow for the scaling up of the early projects in order to reach a larger population. Included in the early projects is the proposed test site for storm water control at Reed & Elm. This location will include agricultural produce land.
 - The Invest Health project is a grant funded projects (by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Reinvestment Fund) that was awarded to a team of local organizations in 2016. The team consists of the Peoria City/County Health Department, the City of Peoria, Peoria Public Schools, Illinois Central College, and the Economic Development Council. The Invest Health project for Peoria is focused on converting the “liability” of vacant lots on the Near South Side to “assets” that will provide healthy food, jobs, and investment. While creating urban agriculture growth areas is clearly part of this project (and in alignment with the Community Conversations), the up-scaling of this project to include a nearby food hub / commercial kitchen, and a pipeline of fresh produce sales to local vendors creates the additional opportunity for job and business growth.
- **Prenatal Care** – this focus (Collective Impact Learning Collaborative) aligns with an ongoing collective impact initiative coordinated by the Peoria City/County Health Department and covered in the Tri-County Health Improvement Plan. This initiative is sponsored by CityMatch. This group has reviewed all available data related to prenatal issues, and particularly on pre-term birth challenges. Various stakeholders have been involved in this conversation, including Heartland Clinic, Peoria Library, area Home Visiting Programs, Peoria Playhouse, and the City of Peoria. Community meetings have been held at the Lincoln Branch Library, Peoria Playhouse, and Woodruff High School.

Actions Going Forward:

- The Invest Health team will be hosting a series of neighborhood level meetings on the Near South Side in late May or early June. The purpose of these meetings is two-fold. First, the team wants to make sure that they are hearing directly from the residents in the area where the proposed project will occur. Second, the team wants to verify with the residents that healthy food access is indeed one of the top health related priorities for them. The attendees from the Community Conversation on Health will be invited to

attend the upcoming neighborhood meeting to bring Invest Health and Community Conversations projects into alignment.

- The Invest Health team is also working with Gifts in the Moment, the Peoria Park District, and the University of Illinois to complete various business plans and work scopes that will help inform the development of an Urban Agriculture / Healthy Food Access pipeline going forward. The information obtained from these studies and reports will be shared with the residents of Peoria, and specifically the residents of the Near South Side to obtain their input.
- The Prenatal Care program will continue to review available data and existing programs in other communities. Outreach to other stakeholders will continue, including resident level outreach. The end goal of the project is to have comprehensive services in place by the end of 2018.

4. Community Conversation - Justice

The infrastructure group, facilitated by Jerry Mitchell, Katie Johnston and Patrick Urich met March 13 at 4 pm at the Lincoln Library. There were 13 people (apart from staff) in attendance. The group discussed the ideas generated at the first two conversations, and spent several lengthy periods of time discussing specific issues.

Restorative Justice and the potential for application within the City.

- Jess McGowan outlined the restorative justice efforts underway in the community. This effort involves intervention and mentoring, teen court, the expungement of records and the implementation of Redeploy Illinois. These efforts have been important for reshaping the criminal justice system in Peoria County.
- Recently, the City of Peoria was awarded \$176,000 to for a Partnership to Reduce Violent Crime grant. This grant funds a research partner from the University of Illinois at Chicago to analyze methods for reducing violent crime within the City through the application of procedural justice.
- Procedural justice is a method of providing public trust in policing. Public trust builds institutional legitimacy and thus public compliance with the law and commitment to the rule of law. More importantly it increases public cooperation with front-line police officers and thus increases officer safety.
- Stakeholders in the efforts to reduce violent crime—the Don't Shoot Initiative, workforce development professionals, cross sector governmental entities, the restorative justice effort, PCAV, SCUC and the Advisory Committee on Police-Community Relations.

The City's Police Department, in conjunction with the identified stakeholders, will take the lead in this area.

Recidivism and Reentry into the Community.

- The work group spent a significant amount of time discussing prison reentry and the recidivism of those coming out of prison.
- The committee identified a need to find gainful employment for people coming back into Peoria because of the impact upon the criminal justice system. The work group felt this was an economic development/workforce development issue that warrants further attention before it becomes a criminal justice issue.

The City's Police Department in conjunction with the Manager's Office will continue to hone solutions to this issue.

5. Community Conversation – Asset Development

The Asset Development group, facilitated by Nick Mitchell and Joe Dulin, met March 14 at 6 pm at Valeska Hinton School. There were 12 people (apart from staff) in attendance. The group discussed the multiple ideas that had been generated at the first two conversations specifically related to asset development.

The focus of the discussion did not get into the prioritization of the multiple ideas generated, rather it focused on what programs currently exist, what issues are currently present and how do we work on this issue going forward.

Two of the primary focuses included tenant issues and homeownership.

Tenant Issues Included:

1. Quality Affordable Housing
 2. Tenant rights
 3. Financial Literacy
- The City of Peoria Community Development Department in partnership with Prairie State Legal Services and Navicore Solutions will be offering tenant educational workshops throughout the year that focus on housing conditions and standard, legal rights of tenants and financial literacy and opportunities.
 - The City of Peoria has created an educational flyer that will be mailed to all registered rental properties in the City of Peoria that highlight available resources to tenants in regard to financial literacy, legal rights and property maintenance codes.
 - The City Council will hold a policy session on affordable housing in the summer of 2017.

Homeownership

1. Education on what it means to be a homeowner

2. Barriers to homeownership – credit issues, getting a mortgage, down payment assistance programs
3. How to keep a home – maintaining a home, working with a budget, programs available for issues
 - The City of Peoria offers multiple programs available for owner occupied properties: Emergency Housing Repair, the Paint Program, the Alley Light Program, Roof Repair Program, Exterior Rat Abatement.
 - The City of Peoria has created a residential property maintenance educational flyer to provide to residents which offers tips and best practices for maintaining a home to ensure future issues are prevented.
 - Throughout the last few years, the City of Peoria in partnership with LISC, POF, PCCEO, EBHNS, Navicore, METEC and a local realtor has administered a program to make homes available for home ownership for income eligible residents through a grant provided by the Attorney’s Generals Office of Illinois.
 - The South Village TIF and East Village Growth Cell TIF program make grants available for residents to make repairs and upgrade home owner occupied properties located within the TIF boundaries.

6. Community Conversation – Workforce Development

The Workforce Development group, facilitated by Patrick Urich, Joe Dulin, and Terence Acquah met March 15 at 4 pm at Valeska Hinton School. There were 20 people (apart from staff) in attendance. The group discussed the multiple ideas that had been generated at the first two conversations specifically related to workforce development.

The focus of the discussion did not get into the prioritization of the multiple ideas generated, rather it focused on what do we have right now, what do we need to expand and identified some solutions.

Two of the primary areas of focus included a need to connect agencies providing services together and the need to get applicants job ready.

Agency Coordination Issues Included:

1. Connecting agencies to encourage sharing and collaboration
 2. Analyze unemployment data and employer opportunities
 3. Develop a workforce strategic plan
- Workforce development is a core element of the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council. They have convened a group of workforce development stakeholders to develop solution sets surrounding agency coordination, titled Opportunity GP.

- The first meeting of the working group was April 13, with the next meeting occurring May 11.
- Part of the focus is on how to get the roughly 3,800 people not employed in 61605 actively seeking employment.

Job Readiness

1. Skills gap – hard and soft skills
 2. Education gap
 3. Child care
- The challenges of preparing the workforce for employment were discussed. Gaps in education and skills, both hard skills like training and soft skills like being prepared for seeking a job and retaining one, were discussed.
 - One major barrier to job readiness that was discussed was the need for child care, particularly on second and third shifts.
 - The work force readiness issue will be explored further by the Opportunity GP working group.

7. Community Conversation – Education

The Education group, facilitated by Patrick Urich, ShamRa Robinson, and Raven Fuller, met March 15 at 6 pm at Valeska Hinton School. There were 25 people (apart from staff) in attendance. The group discussed the multiple ideas that had been generated at the first two conversations specifically related to education.

The focus of the discussion did not get into the prioritization of the multiple ideas generated, rather it focused on what programs currently exist, what issues are currently present and how do we work on this issue going forward.

Two of the primary focuses included financial and institutional issues.

Financial Issues:

1. “Fix the Formula”
 2. School funding level not being met by the State
- Regional Superintendent Beth Derry stated that the method of funding schools was fundamentally flawed in Illinois. There was an effort underway to advocate for change in the funding formula, “Fix the Formula”.

- Further exacerbating this is that the base level of school funding., \$6,119 has not been increased, nor met by the State of Illinois in recent years.
- Advocacy was encouraged by all to address this funding issue.

Institutional Issues

1. Parental and student engagement
 2. Diversity Pipeline – Creating more teachers locally
- The workgroup discussed ways to engage students and parents within the school system. Using the arts to engage the students. Adopt a School programs. Greater involvement of both would assist in the educational environment.
 - Specific attention was given to working to “grow our own” teachers from the community.
 - The workforce will need to reconvene to determine how best to engage with the Alignment Peoria initiative of Peoria Public Schools.