

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Community Redevelopment Agency
West City Community Redevelopment Area Steering Committee
Regular Meeting
Thursday, November 14, 2024

The West City Community Redevelopment Area Steering Committee met in formal session Thursday, November 14, 2024, at 5:00 P.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Arthur Culbert at 5:00 P.M., and the following members were present:

1. Roll Call: Arthur Culbert, Chairperson
Diana Markovits, Co-Chairperson
Brooke Bohall
BJ Kalaidi
Jeffrey Kempf
Jeanne Moeller
Wanda Sams

Absent: None

Staff Present: Jaime D. Perkins, Manager, Neighborhood Services and CRA
Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney
Jill Collins, Administrative Coordinator, Neighborhood Services and CRA

2. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

a. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes (August 8, 2024)

MOTION

Ms. Moeller MOVED to APPROVE the meeting minutes from August 8, 2024. The motion was SECONDED by Ms. Bohall and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT OR COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS NOT REQUIRING SEPARATE COMMENT PERIOD

3 Minutes per Individual

The board heard from the following members of the public:

Brian Lieberman a business owner on West King Street, was pleased with the progress so far and had a meeting with the West King Business Owners Association to come up with a list of specific issues they felt need addressed such as parking, sidewalks, Nights of Lights participation, and several other concerns to the businesses. His daughter lived in the West City and identified a need for sidewalks on Masters Drive.

Marta Hahn expressed the need for pedestrians to be able to cross Masters Drive and Palmer Street because it was dangerous as there was too much traffic and had the train/railroad tracks. She was the treasurer of the Ravenswood Neighborhood Association and held a clean-up recently; however, she was disappointed the next day when the trash was back. She said her main concern was

the danger of walking in the area due to the lack of sidewalks and it was very dark.

4. PRESENTATIONS & UPDATES

A. West City Public Workshop Presentation

Jaime Perkins, Neighborhood Services and CRA Manager presented an update of the most recent CRA public workshop in West City held on September 10, 2024, at Remnant Outreach Ministries (Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church) highlighting the data that was collected including stakeholder feedback and next steps.

Ms. Kalaidi requested the date for the next public outreach meeting at Vista Cove.

Ms. Perkins stated it would be held Thursday, November 21, 2024, at the Vista Cove Clubhouse.

Mr. Culbert asked for clarification regarding the breakout sessions and what was meant by “cultural inclusion efforts”. He asked why the next public outreach meeting was not going to be held in the same type of group breakout format.

Ms. Perkins answered that the “cultural inclusion efforts” was vague but could be vetted out for interpretation by the steering committee and staff. She said she observed multiple groups mention festivals, cultural events and things of that nature. She said the meeting format varied because the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) wanted to offer opportunities for people to engage in different ways. She pointed out that the data collected was similar to what had been received in the public surveys and it was determined that the community needs had been honed-in, which was why the next meeting was designed to give an opportunity for the community to ask questions. She said the focus boards will be displayed at the Vista Cove meeting but would be set up more as

a town hall-style meeting instead of a focus group-style meeting.

B. WCCRA Draft Plan Presentation and Discussion

Erik Bredfeldt with Inspire Placemaking Collective Inc., presented an update of the latest draft of the West City Redevelopment Plan.

Ms. Markovits asked if a timeline was known for the mobility portion of the plan that stated that Masters Drive, Palmer Street and Pellicer Street were proposed to be Complete Streets. She highlighted the goals reviewed in the presentation and said those were what the City would considered for future revitalization. She said it was very important to capture as much as possible and be flexible since it had been pointed out that if something was not included in the plan the plan would have to be amended. She noted that the future acquisitions of conservation land in West City were very important and if the phase “acquiring conservation lands” was required it needed to be stated. She asked for section nine to be reviewed.

Ms. Perkins replied that she was not aware of a timeline for Masters, Palmer and Pellicer to be Complete Streets and that this was the time to highlight challenges observed and what needs should be addressed in the future. She said that she was unaware of these streets being mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan which was where a timeline would be determined. She continued that the Mobility Plan was similar to the Redevelopment Plan designed for issues we want to address, and these streets could be addressed through the CRA Plan.

Mr. Bredfeldt said section nine was in line with the action strategies that he presented, and he reviewed it for the committee.

Ms. Lopez said instead of drilling down to specific methodology like “acquiring conservation lands”, it was more strategic to set goals such as more parks, recreation, and open spaces.

Ms. Perkins said definitive language could be added to say future acquired land and it was noted to make that language adjustment in the plan draft.

Mr. Culbert asked if West King was the domain of the county instead of the city and if that creates a challenge for future projects. He felt that the information collected for the new Black History Museum in West Augustine should be kept as it was of great value. He asked about the role of the steering committee given that the WCCRA was set to dissolve after the plan was approved. He inquired about an ongoing roll for the steering committee and felt there was value in keeping the committee preserved in some capacity as a way for the group to continue to provide input to the city as representatives of the community. He said he went to the first meeting of the West King business owners, there were sixteen people, and twelve businesses represented, he encouraged each committee member and Ms. Perkins to try to attend at least one meeting since it was very informative.

Ms. Perkins confirmed that West King Street was owned by the county and added that there could be an opportunity for an interlocal agreement regarding improvements to county-owned roads. She said the City and the consultant had an excellent relationship with the County, and it was likely the County would be supportive of the city spending money to make improvements to their roadways.

Mr. Bredfeldt said it was a control issue, and the City would have to have a conversation with the county regarding West King Street.

Ms. Lopez added the streets had constrained rights-of-way, which made it difficult to make improvements without considering other options such as secondary streets for alternative routes that were more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. She clarified that a steering committee was not a creature of statute, it was something the city had chosen to do. She suggested the best way to proceed after the steering committee dissolved was to recognize the ongoing entity, that was the agency who the governing board and would be the portal for organized civic groups, merchant groups to organize, get involved and speak up at the agency meetings to communicate priorities.

Ms. Perkins added that the City had three CRAs, one of those areas has never had a steering committee and was the longest-functioning CRA. She added there was no rule stating there must be a steering committee and there were areas in the plan that provided an opportunity for the consultant to point out to staff, in detail, how the plan would be administrated once it was approved by the steering committee and ultimately adopted by the City Commission.

Ms. Kalaidi stated she went through the draft plan and would provide her written list of questions. She said at the beginning of the paragraph on page 18, it should be more specific to say there “is” a need for housing repair assistance for homeowners instead of “may”. She added it should be a priority for West City neighborhoods to be able to stay in and keep their homes. She noted page 37, regarding “coastal vulnerability” which related to resiliency, flooding, and high tides, and in 2021 there was a septic tank vulnerability assessment study conducted for homes in West City. She suggested including funds from the WCCRA for homes to be connected to the City’s gravity sewer under the plan category of sustainability and coastal vulnerability. She stated that WCCRA tax dollars should not be used to pay off the

Broudy's parking garage debt which should be stated in the plan. She noted that Oyster Creek Park was not depicted correctly as indicated on pages 20, 33, 42, 44, and 46. She pointed out improving Oyster Creek was as simple as picking up trash, and felt a bench should not be installed because it could attract homeless people. She was concerned about homeless blight in the area and felt trimming the bushes could be beneficial. She agreed with Ms. Moeller about the housing repair program and thought it would be good to model after the other CRA's and apply a similar program to West City.

Ms. Perkins agreed that it was beneficial to have multiple thriving CRAs/special districts to use a template to apply to West City, but the challenge was that West City was unique and different from Lincolnville. She said West City had industrial, residential, and commercial elements whereas Lincolnville was solely residential, making it more challenging to immolate in West City.

Ms. Moeller said the residents in the CRA area wanted a kayak ramp on the San Sebastian River. She said she spoke to Flagler College because they recently added a kayak ramp for the students at their King Street. Location, and they said they were having issues with tidal flow and there were at least three bridges that go over the river which has created a concern for the students getting stuck if the tide changes. She said the liability was expensive, causing a requirement for anyone wanting to use the kayak launch to provide their own kayak and to pass a swimming proficiency test. She cautioned that a project like this could be problematic. She said she worked at the Homeless Coalition and recently renovated hundred-year-old homes, and 15% of the homes in the area were built before 1949 and 12% as early as 1939. She was supportive of helping to renovate homes, but knew the property value could increase with exterior

improvements. She stressed the importance of prioritizing keeping elderly residents in their homes. She attended the West King Street newly formed Business Association meeting where they reiterated the need for sidewalk improvements and added street lighting. She said lighting was important to the businesses in order for them to stay open later. She said adding a shuttle to West City similar to the one in the historic area was vital. She pointed out flooding was an issue in the area and the addition of sidewalks closer to the Coalition's 5-acre campus from Chapin Street to Smith Street could help with safety. She suggested since the streets were narrow the City could consider making them one-way since there were many children in the area.

They would like to see a restaurant come in to stay open later which would make more lighting very important. She stated the importance of adding a shuttle for West City similar to the historic shuttles in the downtown King St. area. Ms. Moeller continued to say that flooding is a big issue and having sidewalks closer to the Coalition's 5-acre campus from Chapin St. to Smith St. would help with safety but, the streets are too narrow so it might be beneficial to the city to consider making streets one-way because there can be 40-50 children on the campus running across the street.

Ms. Perkins clarified that even though we were getting detailed responses such as adding a kayak launch, the CRA plan was not designed to address those types of improvements specifically; however, it would be vetted and determined at a later date. She said any public space mentioned in the plan could have improvements but what types were not specific. She said any project would have to go through a public engagement effort to obtain feedback from residents, stakeholders, and possibly the City Commission. She noted that the draft plan contains conceptual drawings; however, those were not definitive. She

said items referenced in the plan did not mean it would occur but what was being done now was called 'best practices', which allowed improvements mentioned in the plan to take place now or in the future without having a lengthy process.

5. STEERING COMMITTEE ITEMS

A. Other/New Business

Mr. Culburt asked if there was a way to adhere to Sunshine Laws while the steering committee members took a tour together of the West City area to get more educated about it to be on the same page. He asked the committee if they felt another meeting was necessary to be scheduled since the last one had to be cancelled.

Ms. Lopez replied that because the steering committee was solely an advisory committee for the City and not the final authority, the only way to do anything together as a group would be in the form of a fact-finding mission; however, a tour was not the same and it could not be done. She said each member was allowed to do a one-on-one tour with Ms. Perkins. She acknowledged the steering committee would not continue after the plan was approved; however, suggested forming a private group to engage with the community and other civic and merchant groups to bring feedback to the agency to voice what the community wanted to prioritize could be more effective.

Ms. Perkins said if needed another meeting could be held in February to allow proper time to prepare. She said to keep in mind that adding a meeting could change the trajectory timeframe of adopting the plan.

Mr. Kempf asked Mr. Bredfeldt what information he was looking for from the steering committee from his presentation and how they can help move forward. He asked if there would be an updated draft at

the January meeting and if that would be a final draft.

Mr. Bredfeldt replied that he was provided with feedback and comments about the draft as needed.

Ms. Perkins replied that in January there would be an updated draft, but it would not be final. She continued that when the steering committee approved the draft plan it had to go before the agency, who was the final authority.

Ms. Lopez added that for steering committee purposes, if in January they felt like the draft plan was still not complete, another meeting can be scheduled in February.

Ms. Perkins suggested waiting until January to schedule a meeting in February.

Ms. Sams said from listening to everyone tonight, she notices the same concerns are being brought up about drainage and sidewalks.

Ms. Bohall said many questions she had were answered by the presentation. She understood that draft needed to be comprised of broad language. She added that she would attend the business association meeting and had received emails from them about upcoming dates and recaps of what happened at prior meetings which were helpful.

Mr. Kempf said he appreciated the presentation and what stood out to him was not to name specific projects. He said he saw the importance of continuing community engagement after the steering committee has dissolved to address the agency to voice priorities on an ongoing basis for the West City area.

Ms. Lopez commented that it was helpful to hear specifics so they can be included

under the broader categories of the redevelopment plan.

Ms. Markovits wanted to clarify that if steering committee members were at a meeting at the same time, they cannot talk to each other.

Ms. Lopez replied in the affirmative. She said steering committee members should not talk to each other or use a go-between to respond through to each other.

Ms. Perkins added that it was best for perception purposes not to attend anything together until the board is dissolved.

6. ITEMS BY CITY ATTORNEY

(None)

7. ITEMS BY CITY STAFF

Ms. Perkins reminded the board regarding budgeting and prioritizing projects that when Mr. Bredfeldt's presentation discussed TIF projections there was an agreement with the City of St. Augustine through the CRA that all costs incurred during the implementation of the WCCRA would be returned to the general fund. She informed the board that currently, the WCCRA has incurred \$100k of costs for consulting services and other necessities, and the initial TIF funds accumulated in the beginning would go back to the General Fund that had been done with the previous CRAs when they were established.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE:

Thursday, January 9, 2025

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 P.M.

Minutes Transcribed by: Jill Collins