

MEETING RECORD

Union Street Neighborhood Meeting Webster School Apartments October 23, 2014

Neighbors in Attendance: Josh Cousineau, Aimee Footman, Curtis Webber, Bettyann Sheats, Tiffani Abacha, Richard Walker, Paul Josephson, Janice Barrett, TJ Abacha, Don Tardif, Claire Barclay, Sue Dunn, Maryan Elmi, Chief Phil Crowell, and a number of children

CAC Members: Belinda Gerry, Joe Gray, Larry Pelletier, and Rick Whiting.

Consultant: Frank O'Hara

Community Development Staff: Reine Mynahan

Welcome:

The meeting began with Reine explaining the City was working on a new 5-year plan for spending Community Development funds and is interested in hearing what's important to the people in this neighborhood. She also mentioned the work that Bates College students are doing through a survey and left a sign-up sheet for anyone who wants to participate.

Introductions:

Frank O'Hara opened the meeting with asking everyone, including children, what they liked best about their neighborhood. Responses are: the school, convenience to in-town, proximity to park, access to PAL Center, a family atmosphere, neighborhood changing for the better, quiet peaceful area, nice park, Pettingill Park a good place to walk, something goes wrong neighbors help fix it.

Frank then asked that people talk about the challenges in the neighborhood.

BUILDING ISSUES

- There are lots of empty buildings
- Absentee landlords/no one for tenants to call with problems
- Dumpsters that don't get emptied forcing tenants to use the one at Webster School Apartments
- Building maintenance is a problem
- City needs a way to do something about the messes people leave/junk cars
- Drugs are a big issue
- Lots of people moving in and out/too much transition of neighbors
- Good families want to stay, but can't afford the rent

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS/FACILITIES

- Park is a great asset and is used year round by kids who have no other place to play, but needs lighting
- City doesn't offer free activities for adults
- Playground at PAL is falling apart. Kids want a playground like Park Avenue. Needs more equipment and lights.
- Crossing the sidewalk on Turner Street is treacherous—not a neighborhood street.
- Chestnut Street needs work/kids walk down the middle of the street.
- Stairs (into the park) don't connect to the walk
- Walking at night is dark and dangerous/need more street lights
- Many areas could use street trees
- Could use bike racks at park area
- More parking at gully area
- Benches and shelter to get out of the elements
- Union Street Gully Park needs maintenance/horseshoe pits are a mess/could use bean bag type game; rusted playground equipment
- Skating rink at PAL Center is a great attraction for kids, but it gets dark too early/needs lighting
- New trees at bottom of hill (in Union Street) are in the way of sledding

NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIVITY

- Need a Neighborhood Watch Program
- Area could use a small convenience store/problem is lack of parking
- Family dinners in neighborhood/a place for adults
- Neighborhood association/feeling of community

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

- 1) Absentee landlords/contributes to feeling of blight
- 2) More playground equipment is needed for the neighborhood
- 3) Increase lighting, particularly at PAL Center
- 4) Street trees
- 5) Neighborhood association/watch to increase neighborhood connectiveness
- 6) Consideration for pedestrian oriented improvements/sidewalk safety and lighting

Respectfully Submitted,

Reine Mynahan, Community Development Director