



MEETING SUMMARY

Corridor Conversation Town Hall Meeting

The City of Austin Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Office partnered with the Austin Revitalization Authority (ARA) and the Urban Renewal Agency (URA) to host the Corridor Conversation Town Hall Meeting on East 11th and

12th Streets. The purpose of the meeting was to have a conversation with the community, gather their insights and respond to questions on the redevelopment efforts - past, present and future.

The Corridor Conversation was advertised via e-mails to Corridor stakeholders and residents as well as a direct mail campaign to residents, property owners, businesses and other stakeholders in the redevelopment area as well as online on the City of Austin website (www.ci.austin.tx.us). See Appendix A for a list of target audiences for the mailer and methods used to announce the meeting and encourage participation.

The Corridor Conversation was held on Wednesday, May 26, 2010, from 5:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the Carver Museum, 1165 Angelina Street, and was attended by an estimated 125 community members including residents, business owners, developers, and property owners from within the corridor. The first hour of the meeting provided an opportunity for attendees to view exhibits on the completed projects within the redevelopment area and proposed plans for new projects; as well as information on the organizations responsible for the redevelopment activities (http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/ahfc/comm_revital.htm). During this portion of the meeting, attendees were able to ask questions of City staff and representatives from the ARA and URA, and submit questions and comments to City of Austin staff or posting on a comment board in the lobby of the museum.

The second part of the Corridor Conversation included a brief overview presentation, a 45-minute panel discussion and a question and answer session. Anthony Snipes, Chief of Staff for the City Manager's Office for the City of Austin, kicked off the presentation of the Town Hall Meeting, and explained the efforts of the team to conduct an effective conversation about the redevelopment efforts along East 11th and 12th Streets. He recognized several elected officials in the audience from the City of Austin, and then introduced Shuronda Robinson with Adisa Communications, who facilitated the conversation.

In order to get a better idea of representation from the community, Ms. Robinson polled the audience to understand who was participating in the conversation. A high percentage of attendees, roughly 75 percent, had either lived or worked in redevelopment area for 10-15 years or more; less than 20 percent had lived in the area less than seven years. When asked how attendees felt about the redevelopment progress made in the corridor, about 98 percent of the participants felt that the revitalization efforts along East 11th and 12th Streets "are less than halfway there."

Following the presentation, Ms. Robinson introduced the panel of redevelopment and business experts and representatives from the entities responsible for redevelopment activities. The purpose of the panel was to shed light on the impacts of the current economy, zoning issues, housing development, gentrification, and to answer questions about revitalization efforts along the corridors. The panel consisted of the following representatives:



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Tri-Party Agreement Members

Michael McDonald, Assistant City Manager

Mr. McDonald oversees the Public Safety Departments (Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Services,, Homeland Security and Emergency Management) as well as the Office of Labor Relations. He has more than 27 years experience with the City, the past eight as an Assistant City Manager. He worked through the ranks of the Police Department to Assistant Chief and first APD Chief of Staff before becoming an Assistant City Manager.

Dr. Charles Urdy, Chair, Austin Revitalization Authority

Dr. Urdy, a retired chemistry professor, had an academic career that spanned more than 40 years at colleges including Huston-Tillotson, North Carolina College, Prairie View A&M and Texas Southern. He served on the Austin City Council from 1981-1994.

Sean Garretson, URA Vice Chair/President, Pegasus Planning and Development L.L.C.

Mr. Garretson has consulted on such issues as land planning, market analysis and economic development for the past 15 years and works across the United States in leading downtown and corridor revitalization strategies.

Development Industry Representatives

Sandy Battise, Mortgage Banker, Land Mortgage

Ms. Battise is a seasoned mortgage professional with more than 20 years experience in the real estate industry.

Charles H. Heimsath, President, Capitol Market Research

Mr. Heimsath has been active in commercial and residential market, feasibility studies and real estate since 1976.

Nikelle Meade, Attorney and Partner, Brown McCarroll L.L.P.

Ms. Meade specializes in issues related to local government, real estate and legislative/government affairs.

Corridor Conversation

The following is a summary of the conversation that took place during the conversation at the Town Hall Meeting. The conversation summary is categorized into three topics: Revitalization Efforts, Development Issues, and Communication with the Community.

Revitalization Efforts

- Members of the community asked the panel about the economic climate and its effect on the revitalization efforts along the corridors. It was explained that development has been slow throughout the city, and that, although there are major projects (e.g. high rises) being constructed now, those projects were planned and financed almost five years ago, before the downturn of the economy.



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- East 11th Street has benefited from intensive redevelopment efforts since the redevelopment plan was adopted in 1999; and the community wanted to know why East 12th Street has not been developed in the same way. It was explained that the City of Austin helped to assemble parcels of land in order to jump start economic development on East 11th Street.
- On East 12th Street there are small parcels of land along the corridor that are owned by individuals; therefore, it is not the same type of comprehensive plan. Development along East 12th Street like that along East 11th Street would have to require individual developers to come in and acquire the small parcels of land and assemble them themselves.
- Members of the audience expressed their desire for pedestrian friendly development along East 12th Street. They expressed their desire for the City of Austin to pay more attention to East 12th Street.
- A question was asked about plans for Blocks 16, 17, and 18. Mr. Garretson explained that they are looking into releasing a new Request for Proposal planning of town homes and interim development plans. Further information on Blocks 16, 17 and 18 is available on the City of Austin website at www.cityofaustin.org/housing. Click on "Commercial Revitalization".

In summary, the general consensus from the conversation with members of the community is that they wanted redevelopment activities to be completed along Block 16, 17 and 18, and they desire a major focus of projects and funding for redevelopment on East 12th Street.

Development Issues

- Questions were asked by the community about development barriers, and if there were barriers on investment for development along the corridors. The panel responded that layers exist that sometimes frightened developers, making them believe it is harder to develop their projects along the corridors. However, with regards to zoning, the Neighborhood Conservation Combining District (NCCD) actually facilitates development by allowing greater density and waiving application fees.
- Members of the community expressed their concerns with rising property taxes due to redevelopment. The panel discussed ways in which the City has purchased parcels and used subsidy programs to make housing more affordable.
- A resident of North Austin asked about affordable living in East Austin. The panel responded that the City of Austin and nonprofits in Austin have invested in affordable housing developments and programs that benefit residents in East Austin. These nonprofits are reaching out and recruiting African American businesses and homebuyers.
- A developer from the area asked if developers were limited on their opportunities to develop on East 11th and 12th Streets due to the tri-party agreement. The panel responded that ARA is the preferred developer on Block 17; however, it is not the preferred developer on any properties. The tri-party agreement does not prevent a private developer from developing projects in the corridors.



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- A member of the community expressed her concern that the ARA has misled the community because most of the development focused on East 11th Street and not East 12th Street. She asked why most of the funds used for development were spent on East 11th Street. The panel explained that, although \$9.1 million was to be used for development of the corridors, this amount does not go very far. Additional funds need to be identified for East 12th Street.
- A member of the community asked about the purpose of the ARA. The panel explained that, when discussions began about revitalizing the corridors, many residents in the area were distrustful of the City leading those redevelopment efforts. The City felt that they needed to create an organization to ensure that the stakeholders had a say in development efforts, and not just City officials. This idea, to have redevelopment occur with sensitivity to the existing community, resulted in the creation of the ARA.
- Several people emphasized the need for affordable housing and expressed confusion about how many people actually have benefitted from City and ARA affordable housing projects.

In summary, there continues to be questions as to the purpose of the ARA and the URA, and why these agencies were created. The panel did talk about the purpose of ARA and the URA and why they were created, and explained that the purpose of the Town Hall Meeting was to collect input and insight from the local community on what needs to be done to continue redevelopment efforts along East 11th and 12th Streets.

Communication with the Community

- A member of the community asked whom she could speak with about her concerns. She felt that residents of East Austin are being forced to move further East (e.g. Manor, TX), which was a concern to her. She felt that the meetings were not doing anything to keep it affordable for people to continue to live in the area. The panel responded that the tri-party agreement was created to resolve these issues and to work with the community about their concerns.
- There were concerns expressed about neighborhood groups stalling or thwarting redevelopment efforts of private landowners. Also, several discussed lack of trust about the way ARA has handled communication with property owners about redevelopment of their parcels.
- The panel added that a fast track permitting process would help with redevelopment efforts, and that the tri-party agreement is working on establishing ways to make it easier to develop on East 11th and 12th Streets.
- Several people spoke about the need to preserve the rich cultural history of the area as a place that exemplified African American heritage, including markers and historic sites preservation.
- The City of Austin Neighborhood Housing is continuing to receive feedback and input from citizens through:
 - Website: www.cityofaustin.org/housing
 - Phone Line: 512.974.3128
 - Email: sandra.harkins@ci.austin.tx.us



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In summary, residents of the corridors want to see revitalization efforts conducted in their area; however, they want their voices heard, and they want to maintain the rich culture of the area. Members of the community want more affordable housing, and want East Austin to develop.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are the consultant's recommendations based on the meeting:

1. Provide information to clarify the development process.
2. Identify resources and mechanisms to make it easier for developers to create projects in the corridor, especially along East 12th Street. Communicate that those resources and mechanisms are available.
3. Explain the purpose, role and activities of ARA.
4. Provide information on affordable housing programs in the area.
5. Provide frequent information on the redevelopment of Blocks 16, 17, and 18.
6. Develop a comprehensive plan for East 12th Street Redevelopment activities and inform the community.

Overall, due to the need to continue to educate the public concerning the tri-party agreement, the process and procedures for redevelopment as well as the roles and responsibilities of the City, URA and ARA in the revitalization of the area, it is recommended a proactive communication with neighborhood groups directly impacted by the Central East Austin Master Plan occurs in the form of:

1. Ongoing updates to the Commercial Revitalization website: <http://www.cityofaustin.org/housing>.
2. Promotion of meetings where residents can weigh in on issues:

Meetings held on a monthly basis include:

- Austin City Council
 - Urban Renewal Board
 - Community Development Commission
 - African American Resource Advisory Commission
 - Austin Revitalization Authority
3. Voicemail line/email comments
 4. Updates to City Council on progress



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Appendix A

Summary of outreach and marketing:

1. Door to Door Canvassing of Businesses along East 11th and 12th Streets to deliver posters/flyers
2. 1,800 direct mail pieces were sent via the Planning Development & Review Notification process (Corridor addresses and 500 ft radius)
3. Churches
4. Distribution to key neighborhood associations and groups
5. Weed and Seed distribution of about 250 contacts
6. Ads placed in NOKOA and Villager
7. Promoted on KAZI.
8. Stakeholder List of emails compiled by TriParty sponsors of about 200 key contacts
9. Web site presence
10. Sent to key contacts in the Community Registry in targeted zip codes (via the Public Information Office)
11. ARA -door to door canvassing assistance in surrounding neighborhoods