

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Anna Lopez Brosche

Council President

FROM: Gerrie Ford-Hardin, Executive Council Assistant

Council District 10

SUBJECT: Special Committee on Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods Final Report

The Special Committee on Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods was charged to review the opportunities facing the City’s diverse neighborhoods and determine and make recommendations on what actions, policies, programs and funding we can propose to lift up our neighborhoods.

The committee considered a wide range of actions to realize the potential for having safe and healthy neighborhoods. The City agencies providing testimony included the Neighborhoods Department, Municipal Code Compliance Division, Public Works Department, Department of Health, Jacksonville Sheriff Office, JEA, Parks and Recreation Department, and Office of Economic Development which, along with community development corporations, provided their input towards the charge of the committee.

The Special Committee on Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods was established almost a year ago. Council District 4 – Brookview Area - and Council District 8 - 29th and Chase area - were selected as pilot areas to begin the process of reviewing neighborhoods with similar boundaries. The Brookview (CD4) and Moncrief (CD8) areas were the target of the study. The following findings and recommendations are a result of the Special Committee on Safe and Healthy Neighborhood’s work.

1. Neighborhoods Findings and Recommendations - Active cases were presented and discussed and a recommendation was submitted to the committee regarding planned Neighborhood Improvements.

Developing the Model

1. Analyze the factors that tip a neighborhood:
2. Neighborhood appearance
3. Level of civic engagement
4. Amount and type of commercial activity
5. Environmental factors
6. Safe and decent housing
7. Adequate infrastructure
8. Organizational capacity of residents
9. Parks or recreational space
10. Neighborhoods safety
11. Schools
12. Work with Councilmembers to identify a neighborhood that has multiple factors tipping toward decline
13. Work with Councilmembers to narrow the area to a 5 block radius – consider whether a park or school is included in or adjacent to the area, current or future infrastructure projects, CRA, access to public transportation, other available resources, etc.
14. Complete an inventory of the identified neighborhood with other City Departments and District Councilmember
15. Streets/sidewalks/stormwater ponds/ditches
16. Park improvements or safety enhancements
17. Home repairs or demolitions/board-ups
18. Streetlights
19. Mowing/tree trimming
20. Lot clearing
21. Tree survey
22. Plan improvements under current contracts, if possible
23. Coordinate with JEA, JTA and FDOT
24. Identify funding sources
25. Prioritize improvements and create timeline
26. Work with District Councilmember to engage residents
27. Park Findings and Planned Park Improvements – Brookview Elementary Park – Brookview – CD4 and CD8. - As a result of the work of the Special Committee on Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods in conjunction with the Parks Department, the Department will continue to monitor the overall maintenance of each park in CD4 and CD8. Safety has been one of the main issues within the parks and development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will be implemented as a recommendation. Mowing up-keep and general maintenance of the park - mowing has been increased from 18 times per year to 24; repair fence; add onto community garden and add gazebo and natural walking trail at the community garden. Park improvements – Simonds Johnson Park –the community center has reopened and provides after-school and summer programs; renovate existing basketball courts; update park lighting to LED; add outdoor fitness equipment and resurface existing walking trail.
28. Office Economic Development (OED) Findings and Recommendations - The OED provided a detailed review of the economic development projects within Council Districts 7, 8, 9 and 10 as a subset of the whole. OED stated that strategic development is essential to creating safe and healthy neighborhoods. From July 1, 2015 thru April 25, 2018, 16 out of 33 projects within the City have been located in districts 7, 8, 9 and 10. These projects have created 2,110 jobs and will generate $5,260,948 in projected annual ad valorem taxes. The projected capital investment totals $542,925,481 with a maximum City investment of $25,039,800. Approximately 1,440 businesses are within the census tracts designated as Economically Distressed Areas (EDAs).

One of the programs that the OED is focusing on is the Façade Grant Program. In an attempt to educate the public about the grants and a business’ eligibility for receiving grant funding, OED worked with the Building Inspection Division to notify all licensed contractors doing business with the city about the grant program. The concept is that contractors can inform business owners of potential funding for projects they may be bidding on. The Neighborhoods Department also emailed information to all registered CPAC organizations. OED discussed recommended changes to the grant program in order to encourage more participation by businesses. These changes include:

* Modifying the public to private dollar match ratio from 1:1 to 2:1;
* Allow documented contribution of materials to count toward private match;
* Expand eligible improvements list; and
* Enable administrative approval with notification to City Council and Council Auditor on a semi-annual basis.

It was anticipated that the modifications to the program would/could drive new investment. OED worked with the City Council Special Committee on the Public Investment Policy (PIP) to develop the qualifying criteria for establishing EDA’s. At the PIP Committee meetings, there were questions about the qualifying criteria and the indicators related to vacant/dilapidated properties and the indicators related to vacant/dilapidated properties in a particular census tract. Although there was no conclusive measurement to be considered, there may be additional consideration regarding sites that may have the residential component to capture the properties that have potential benefits. It was recommended that outreach become an active effort in the promotion of the program. OED initiated a mailing campaign to every business within the Economically Distressed Areas. It was discussed that further outreach may include door-to-door efforts; sign-in sheets from CPAC meetings, etc. The committee concluded that legislation should be drafted and introduced by the committee members adopting the recommendations.

OED believes the proposed recommendations will allow the program to be far more effective and efficient. The recommendation from the committee is to provide more effort in targeting and promoting capital investments to bring more businesses that will employ people in these areas.

1. JEA – Findings and Recommendations - Ms. Nancy Kilgo, JEA Director of Governmental Relations, provided a water and sewer update regarding the neighborhoods in Districts 4 and 8. Residents that can have service in both areas are close to being fully covered. JEA will run a customer list to determine if there are any outstanding issues. She reviewed the packet of information distributed to the committee. Ms. Kilgo explained that the 2011 Quarterly Financial Summary for Water and Sewer Expansion Authority (WSEA) was the last report submitted that addresses the total amount of funds expended. Upon the dissolution of the WSEA, the remaining funds were transferred to Public Works Stormwater Utility.
2. Municipal Code Enforcement - Findings and Recommendations - Mr. Bryan Mosier, Chief of Municipal Code Enforcement, distributed statistical data regarding the systemic inspections completed within District 4 (Southside Estates area) and District 8 (Moncrief area and 29th and Chase area). He gave an in-depth analysis of the actions taken and results of the inspections. Mr. Mosier agreed to provide Council Member K. Brown a monthly status update of all CARE issues within District 8. After he completed his thorough analysis of the all the systemic inspections, Mr. Mosier stated that conducting the inspections was an effective process that will be implemented in other neighborhoods.
3. JSO Findings and Recommendations - Undersheriff Pat Ivey provided background information regarding security cameras previously purchased in 2014 with forfeiture funds. The cameras were installed to monitor areas with a high concentration of illegal dumping. None of these original cameras are functional today due to the obsolete technology. New cameras have been purchased to be used as a tool to combat illegal dumping. These new cameras are superior in versatility and technology. Cameras for dumping are only used at dumping sites where the use will net positive evidence of the illegal activity. The use of cameras has limitations, including cost, security of the camera, and environmental inadequacies. Additionally, a current list of the 26 most reported illegal dumping sites was distributed.

Council Members/Staff

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