

## **Mayor's Task Force on Preserving Dynamic and Diverse Neighborhoods Public Meetings Questions and Commentary**

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Tafolla Junior High School, 1303 W César East Chávez Blvd, San Antonio, TX 78207

Attendance: 133

Signed in to speak: 42

Spoke at the meeting: 16

Number of Comment Cards: 26

Did this meeting help you understand the recommendations of the Mayor's Task Force on preserving Dynamic and Diverse Neighborhoods?

YES: 3

No: 11

Did not answer: 13

### **Comment Cards (as written, no corrections)**

There should not be a separate meeting for Spanish speakers-we all live in the same community. The city needs to provide adequate Spanish/English interpretation at all public meetings. If the city receives federal funds, in fact, Title VI of the Civil rights Act requires it.

Stop demolition of historic buildings.

Provide financial assistance for repairs, adaptive reuse, renovations etc to qualified (in financial need) owners so they can stay in their homes.

Train building code enforcement personnel so they will be able to recommend repairs vs. demolition.

I have attended every Task Force meeting/panel discussion thus far and this was the first one where people really had dialogue and discussion on the real issues and the communities we want create and sustain. People need to be heard. This will save time and money in the long run-- developing a system now of real community dialogue that can continue with the long life of the commission.

When thinking about a Relocation Conference for 100s -1000s of individuals, who thought to have a conference with developers to pay a livable wage before breaking ground on major developments where working class people will work? (so they can stay in their homes) Who feels good about paying hard working people sub-standard wages? You eat their food; they clean your toilets and take care of your children. Pay a dignified wage or those businesses can go elsewhere.

The panel should have addressed specific questions. I understand time was an issue tonight (Tafolla) but there still should have been time set aside for at least some of the Task Force members to speak as their own person in addition to being on the Task Force.

I understand more fully every day that this city is more moved by developers than gente. This makes me sad because so many great people who could be making our city a model for this world are ignored.

To persons in charge of this meeting please note that a group called TOPS is using this meeting for their specific needs. Carlos Mata (210) 433-3345 Please contact me

- 1) Resident of Westside need to speak first [sic]
- 2) Have all speakers to identify who they are with and what their interest are [sic]

Written question to be submitted are insult. [sic]

Thanks for everything. It was a pleasure for me to be here.

The meeting was a good idea. Lots of good comment. Sorry it wasn't better prepared.

Lots of conversation about helping with relocation, but please keep in mind those who don't want to be removed or leave their home.

Would like to see more town halls especially those that allow people to interact with recommendations Task Force. Also if Mayor and council people do not come they HAVE TO SEND reps. are obligated to speak on behalf of Mayor or council person- I mean you Mayor Taylor and Rebecca Viagran [sic]

Consider using the "platica" format. Platica -conversation is a traditional format for meeting in a community.

You cannot in good faith present recommendations yet!!! These two/three town hall events are not enough! I have attended Task Force meetings and can say that there has not been enough-research, community input, conversation on the issues within/among the Task Force, or any recommendations for how there can be FUNDING to make real change happen! it was an INSULT to come to one of the most affected communities with a PRESENTATION--instead of coming to HEAR THE VOICES OF THOSE AFFECTED FIRST!!!

Very confusing. The community needs to speak first. City staff has controlled the entire process and the written plan. City needs to hold day long community meetings on this issue as it is attempting to do for developers during their housing summit. And the city needs to invest in translation equipment for 200folks and pay translators to do simultaneous translation so we don't

have to waste time in translation after each person speaks. It's 2015 and SA should be fully prepared for its Spanish speaking population.

Jose Gallegos, 214 W. Academy, San Antonio, TX 78226, 210-363-9160 wants hard copy mailed to his address

Simultaneous translation please.

Lisa Ortega lortega@mhm.org

Carlos Manriquez, MA HA, 1610 Buena Vista, San Antonio, TX 78207 copy RE: event (minutes) summary

No sirvio

*Translation: it was not useful*

Para mi en lo personal. No me gusto por que no estuvieron (sic) bien preparados en primer lugar en traduccion y otra que tampoco estan preparado para seguir (sic) haciendo rezonificaciones. Ustedes no tienen idea de cuanto sufre la gente. Mejor de rezonificar ayuden a las familias ha (sic) reparar sus casas.

*Translation: For me, personally, I didn't like it because they weren't well prepared, first of all, with translation and also are not prepared to continue rezoning. You have no idea how much people are suffering. Instead of rezoning, help families to repair their houses.*

Como no hubo buena traduccion, no mucho. La traduccion debe de ser perfecta, por favor. Porque se manejan muchos tecnicismos que al traducir los no lo hagan correctamente la traduccion y nosotros no los entendemos bien. Y para entender bien, que sea alguien que habla muy bien las 2 lenguas.

*Translation: Since there wasn't good translation, (the meeting did not help) much. The translation should be perfect, please. Because many technical terms are used and when the translation is not done correctly, we don't understand well. And to understand well, it should be somebody who speaks the two languages very well.*

### **Facilitator and Task Force Notes**

- Strong demand for a Southside meeting
- Simultaneous translation was the expectation for the meeting
- Put the People's Platform (A "Development Without Displacement" Policy Platform for The City of San Antonio) the on the website and acknowledge the platform in the minutes.
- Put the pre-submitted questions and the answers on the questions on the website in English and Spanish

- The feeling that the recommendations don't acknowledge the problem, the feeling that recommendations are assuming relocation. Be specific that relocation is the option only after all other options are exhausted.
- The clear preference is for people to stay in place as owners or renters.
- Include the history of Mission Trails as the impetus for the Task Force. The history needs to be acknowledged as informing the recommendations.
- The desire is for a grant program that provides funds for the elderly and disabled to rehabilitate and fix up their homes.
- Develop local programs with universities to develop neighborhood mentors.
- Elevators, restroom signs, table, prepackaged materials--be familiar with the layout of the building
- Citizens have lingering concerns that prevention of displacement is not being addressed through policy in the draft document
- There is a belief that the Task Force is not focused enough on the people, but rather on buildings and investment
- The proposed housing bond recognizes potential to help with affordable housing, but the need should also be addressed today—not just in 2017
- One concern is the prevalence of investors asking to purchase homes in inner city neighborhoods that are not for sale
- Citizens mentioned that the “Development Without Displacement” platform was not integrated into the document
- There is a request that the recommendations include a review of existing policies as a means of identifying those that may result in displacement
- The report needs context: How does the existing neighborhood landscape lead to the current policy recommendations? How do the recommendations address the needs? What additional work will the Commission need to do in the future to address what isn't already addressed through the work of the Task Force?
- Need translation equipment, issues with Spanish translation
- Street improvement/drainage
- 6 Southside groups on the Southside, slow down process
- Original draft of proposal (had) no plan for public input
- University area by Santa Maria→ received letter wanting to buy house, do you (sic) if someone is trying to take advantage
- Historical/report on Mission Drive in final report
- Develop ideas to prevent displacement
- Develop ideas to avoid negative impact
- Presentation/report add why there is a big gap in income?
- A meeting with power point and written materials in both English & Spanish, simultaneous interpretation
- Yes but we will need English translation for those of us who do not speak Spanish
- Yes-simultaneous translation
- Yes-and please make it clear to these people that we (Task Force) discussed this (translation + Spanish) in a previous meeting and we were told there would be translation and all literature in Spanish
- Yes we need a Spanish language meeting, preferably in the Southside, and it needs to have information translated into English. Retain a professional translator who will translate exactly what is being said. And it should just be for input.

### **3/18 Additional Notes From Audio Recording**

Everything -- oral translations, draft documents, online information and comments should be completely bilingual

Slow down the process

The Mayor should be at the public meetings, the community wants to see her engaged with the citizens.

Public input was demanded for the process, it was not part of the original plan

Displacement is the main issue. Moving incentives are not sufficient--recommend policies to avoid displacement.

Make policy recommendations more specific. The report should include a review of existing ordinances and polices affecting the displacement of people and other adverse impacts on inner city neighborhoods.

The process of informing people of what is going on in their neighborhoods needs to change to include more of the neighborhood not just those close by the affected property.

Look at rezoning policies and how they affect families and neighborhoods

People choose to remain in areas targeted for reinvestment. We want to encourage people from the area to buy the properties and reinvest in them.

There is no safety net for people who live in sub-standard housing, they cannot afford to go anywhere else.

There is a need for an education program for working class people on how to keep their property or rental home in compliance with city regulations.

Policies are needed to protect the rights of people to stay in their homes.

The focus is on investment in inner city neighborhoods rather than the neighborhoods that already exist and what the issues are in those neighborhoods. Focusing on investment rather than on the issues intimates there is something wrong with the neighborhoods and the people who live there.

Cultural and historic neighborhoods of the working class need to be protected in our community.

Home repairs and rehabilitation moneys cannot wait until the 2017 bond. Need to invest money used for demolition on repairs instead

Don't provide incentives to developers, instead offer incentives to the residents to repair their homes.

The Westside needs a beautification program and needs to be a designated Historic District

Include the testimony and recommendations of the Mission Trails residents included on-line and in the report

The Right To The City People's Platform on Development Without Displacement was not acknowledged or included in the notes or online

Draft report has parts that needs strengthening: Relocation Policy --the emphasis should be on preventing displacement not replication

Provide historical context in the report that names Mission Trails as the impetus for convening the Task Force. Context is missing from the draft.

The Task Force has not reached consensus on what is included in the draft report, but there is a commitment from Task Force members that public input will be discussed and considered.

The community feels the staff has too much influence on the development of the report.

San Antonio has the highest income disparity in the nation according to a 2014 report. There is no contextualization for this disparity in the draft recommendations. This needs to be included.

Potential partnerships:

- Habitat For Humanity--temporary housing for people while their house is being rehabilitated
- UTSA or other university with Urban Studies---do surveys to assist in assessing vacant, owner occupied, rental, in-fill and demographics information
- Texas A & M Extension program CYFAR

NOTE----There was a program that was referred to as a model by speaker Gabriel Gonzales (tape was too garbled)

## **Questions**

What can be done about street flooding/drainage and lighting in the neighborhoods through this process?

How can we get more representation for our affected neighborhoods for this process?

Six Southside groups submitted petitions to the Task Force for a meeting on the Southside. Why was there not a meeting scheduled on the Southside?

What communities are being looked at for best practices?

Inner City Reinvestment and Infill policy identifies target areas (map) for private reinvestment. How does this tie-into the long-term recommendations re: the land trust mentioned in the recommendations?

Are the elderly and certain areas being targeted by developers? What can the Task Force do about this?

Does developer provided relocation assistance provide moving costs or the difference between old the rental rate and the new rental rate for 12 months? This language is not clear.

Will all, or only some moving costs be covered?

Why are incentives given to developers for new apartments for middle and upper income people in working class neighborhoods?

What is the city's policy in cases where a developer forgoes incentives? Will the developer avoid paying relocation assistance?

Has the Task Force developed ideas to avoid displacement?

Has the Task Force identified ideas to avoid negative impact on history, culture and quality of life?

What is the city's policy on relocation assistance in cases where the residents are displaced due to code compliance violations?

What happens if there is displacement due to commercial encroachment? Is there a policy for this type of displacement?

Have policies on vacant buildings been reviewed?

Thursday, March 19, 2015

Ella Austin Community Center, 1023 N Pine St, San Antonio, TX 78202

Attendance: 99

Signed-in to speak: 17 from Wednesday, March 18

16 from Thursday, March 19

Spoke at the meeting: 2 from Wednesday, March 18

16 from Thursday, March 19

Number of comment cards: 13

Did this meeting help you understand the recommendations of the Mayor's Task Force on Preserving Dynamic & Diverse Neighborhoods?

Yes: 4

No: 4

Did not answer: 5

### **Comment Cards (as written, no corrections)**

Not enough substance to the recommendations, too vague

Too high-level, no details given; The city needs to protect homes from being raised (sic) for parking; Homes need to be maintained by their owners; What is the goal ratio of tenant – occupied vs. owner-occupied homes?; Speeding cars are a problem for all inner-city neighborhoods and should be addressed city-wide

The Task Force recommendations should reflect Mission Trails being at the root of their creation. It should also pay attention to the hybrid type neighborhoods such as mobile home parks. If the recommendations had been in place before Mission Trails-would it have been helpful? That should be a question that is answered before the Task Force dismisses.

Please don't cut off peoples mic (sic); it's really rude and doesn't help your standing in the community

Thanks for addressing this issue. Seems that a community needs assessment would be appropriate.

Why are speakers only allowed 3 minutes to speak as such topics that require more in depth discussions.

What exactly is being done to fix the problem of discriminatory redistricting? For example, Alamo Heights ISD allows a wealthy neighborhood to pool tax money. People within that school district get the benefits of a top-level education and the advantage of living near the heart of the city. Also, why is housing more affordable in suburban districts/areas like Marbach than in urban areas with dense poverty (i.e. West and east sides)?

Please consider implementing a “Habitat for Humanity” model for renovating abandoned & vacant property. Add to the tax base rather than eliminating or deferring developer taxes. Use resources to create more resources.

The Alamodome Garden NH has been tremendously “neglected” by this city. Our area has been neglected since they stopped the plans to complete 6 phases. We were separated from the Historical Denver Heights neighborhood and since then we’ve been totally left out. Finish/complete the neighborhood next to the Alamodome as you complete the convention center.

We need an avenue to address concerns of this city online (open avenue)

We should not limit people on the microphone when asked to speak to the panel.

Zachry-invented and built modular motel rooms. I think someone could invent houses in this manner that would gut the infrastructure and update and easily bring up to code these older neighborhood homes.

Que se presente la mayor. A escuchar nos.

*Translation: The mayor should attend to listen to us.*

### **Facilitator and Task Force Notes**

- TX A&M→ serious services-research based program (overview of program)
- Happy to have Task Force
- Not enough info in SA, where is money coming from. Seniors cannot live downtown, what are we doing for us (seniors).
- Not satisfied with WDC/SAGE
- People who do not qualify for programs-Casa Verde or other programs
- Property owner responsible for alley ways
- Forum through internet/email
- Draft report in Spanish, not very accessible for everyone
- Recognize, act, re-act livable wage
- Neighborhood empowerment zone
- Senior housing component is missing
- Community gardens should be in consideration for the recommendations.
- There should be an option to request simultaneous Spanish translation
- A great deal of suspicion regarding where the money is coming from to revitalize the older parts of San Antonio.
- Suspicion that there is a hidden agenda that citizens do not find out about until things are already happening
- Concern about how seniors can afford to live in downtown. They have lived in their homes for decades. Where will they go?
- There is not senior advocate from a commission on the Task Force.
- Information is not getting out to seniors and people who are not on-line.

- Concern about the Westside Development Corporation. What are they doing to help the people?
- Who are the decision makers? The people who live in the areas are not involved in the decisions. There is no representation of the people who live in the areas being talked about.
- What are the incentives for people who live in low income neighborhoods?
- Alley behind houses originally for garbage pick-up were maintained by the city, now property owners are expected to maintain them. Why should property owners have to maintain these areas when it is not their property?
- There is not enough opportunity to comment--citizens want an opportunity to comment online.
- The DRAFT report needs to be accessible and available in Spanish
- The DRAFT report is not easy to find online--make it more obvious.
- The language of the report treats displacement as inevitable --the position should be to keep people in their homes
- Recognize, Act, React----The city does not recognize that not everyone can afford to fix their homes. The city was built on underpaid labor. Pressure needs to be put on the local and state entities for a livable wage in Texas
- 1 in every 4.5 people are seniors and that number is growing. There should be a specific senior housing component addressed in the recommendations
- Developers are getting across the board incentives with no regard to neighbors. No one asks the neighbors what they want
- Developers sell the building and all the agreements are nullified with the new owners
- Idea--city buys old houses and moves them to vacant lots to fill-in spaces in existing neighborhoods
- People in the older neighborhoods see themselves as Urban Pioneers.
- Success measures for 2017 bond ---economic disparity, affordable housing
- The Task Force should actively and aggressively go to those in greatest need to discuss and develop success measures. Task Force should do due diligence and focus on the people who need it the most
- The Esperanza and TOPS questions and answers and the *Right to the City* document needs to be posted on the website
- Developers, code compliance and CBDG money is going to harass people and move them out of their homes and neighborhoods
- Harassment is an issue--developers are coming into neighborhoods and knocking on doors asking to see the owner who is often sick and elderly and trying to convince them to sell their homes that are not for sale. If the houses are sold they are often being flipped by the developers.
- The Peanut Factory is an example of incentives for development that is promoted as student housing, a 450 sq ft space is renting for \$859.
- Raising (sic) communities is cultural genocide. People put down roots and then they are ripped out. Lower income people are not represented on the Task Force
- The structure of the Task Force is top down, does not reflect the people who are affected
- Long-term residents need PROTECTION
- The Task Force needs to be on-site to witness development when a house is being knocked down- need to be there to witness the process

- People cannot afford the basic services so how can they keep up their homes and the (sic) where they live?

### **3/19 Additional Notes From Audio Recording**

Mitigate or prevent displacement and rising property taxes to keep people in their homes

Texas A & M Extension Program offers research-based educational programs such as Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) to teach nutrition, horticulture and sustainability so residents can give back to their neighborhoods such as with community gardens.

Some neighborhoods have grown beyond their capacity.

How can seniors afford to live downtown?

There is a question about the decision making process and transparency of Westside Development Corporation and San Antonio Growth on the Eastside (SAGE). Decisions are being made by people not living in the area.

Glad to see houses being fixed up. Are there low interest loans or incentives for people who do not qualify for Casa Verde programs?

Release the Draft report in Spanish and make the language of the report in English and Spanish more accessible for the public.

Involve the neighborhood associations in the process

How will Neighborhood Empowerment Zones work for homeowner and for land owners?

Include a senior housing component as a part of the discussions.

When developers sell buildings and property, they have received incentives. Use those taxes to help the neighborhood stabilize the area and benefit people who need help stabilizing their homes.

What happened with Phase 6 of the Alamodome?

The city should buy up vacant houses and move them onto vacant lots to help stabilize neighborhoods.

Focus the 2017 Bond on those with the greatest need

The Peanut Factory project got incentives, but it is not affordable