

## **Uptown Task Force Meeting Minutes**

**September 6, 2018**

**8:00 – 10:00 a.m.**

**Uptown Partners Office (NeighborWorks Western PA, 710 Fifth Avenue, Suite #1000)**

**Present:** Roger Altmeyer (UPMC-Mercy), Angelica Ciranni (GBA), Derek Dauphin (DCP), Ruari Egan (PWSA), Amy Hart (Center for Hearing & Deaf Services), Simona Loberant (SEA), Sean Luther (InnovatePGH), Breen Masciotra (Port Authority), Shantalaya Mathews (URA), Justin Miller (DOMI), Ray Morrison (Uptown Resident), Mary Ellen Solomon (Duquesne University), Andréa Stanford (Allegheny County), Joe Wingefeld (Uptown Partners), Joan Hayek (Duquesne University)

**Regrets:** Greg Alan (Duquesne Light), Terri Baltimore (Hill House Association), Cliff Blashford (NRG), Anthony Boule (Parking Authority), Brian Brown (GBA), Gary Desjardins (PPG Paints Arena), Rich DiClaudio (Energy Innovation Center), Craig Dunham (representing Pittsburgh Penguins), Grant Ervin (City of Pittsburgh), Bill Generett (Duquesne University), Tad Hale (Avenu), Carol Hardeman (Hill District Consensus Group), Josh Henschel (Resident), Amber Jackson (Bethlehem Haven), Debbi Linhart (Bethlehem Haven), John Kraemer (NRG), Brian Kurtz (PDP), Mischelle McMillan (De Ruad Resident Council President), Jeanne McNutt (Uptown Partners), Linda Metropoulos (ACTION – Housing), Leslie Montgomery (Pittsburgh Blind and Vision Services), Stephanie Moyes (Bethlehem Haven), James Myers Jr. (Urban Innovation21), Kristen Osterwood (GBA), Tim Parks (Life'sWork), Rebekkah Ranallo (OPDC), Lama Shehadeh (DCP), Janet Strahosky (Bethlehem Haven), John Wilds (Pitt)

**Invited/Absent:** Antoine Davis (Pittsburgh Police), Kirk Holbrook (Rep. Wheatley), Marimba Milliones (Hill CDC), Carl Redwood, Jr. (Hill Consensus Group), Sonny Williams, Daniel Wood (Councilman Lavelle)

**Guests:** Tony Caralline (Public Art and Civic Design, City of Pittsburgh), Chad Elish (HackPGH), Yesica Guerra (Public Art and Civic Design, City of Pittsburgh)

**Call to Order/Welcome:** Mary Ellen Solomon convened the meeting at 8:10 a.m. with an introduction of all present Task Force members.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mary Ellen asked for a motion to have the August meeting minutes approved that were previously distributed to all members via email. The motion was approved with no dissent.

### **Agenda Discussions:**

*(1) Uptown Public Art Project – Tustin Top Lot:* Several months ago Public Art Office presented different options for the Uptown Public Art Program to the Task Force and ultimately Tustin Park was chosen for the project. After releasing an RFP for the project and creating an advisory board, the City's final decision was to pursue HackPGH's proposal as it covered all aspects of the RFP.

HackPGH's presentation to the Task Force included sharing the full proposal and walking through the art and technology elements. HackPGH will partner with Meta Mesh Wireless Communities to provide free public Wi-Fi at the park. They will also install a bench with a solar charging station for tablets, phones, and laptops. Surrounding this bench will be solar-powered lighting, art installations such as sculptures, an open canvas for artistic expression, and a waterproof sign that advertises the Wi-Fi and how to use it.

For the art features HackPGH will partner with Chiaka Zulu Howze, a local Uptown resident and artist, who will be showcasing the rich history of the Uptown neighborhood throughout his art in the park. This includes paintings on the fences around the larger trees, the asphalt, as well as some small art installations. Other art improvements in the park include a storm water management labyrinth, updates to the playground, and possibly a "Four Seasons"

painting on the side of the water shed. HackPGH will present their proposal at the Tustin Park Block Party on September 16<sup>th</sup> from 4 pm to 9 pm in order to get feedback from the community.

**Some questions posed by Task Force members:**

*What is HackPGH?* HackPGH is the first makerspace in Pittsburgh, located right in the Uptown neighborhood. They provide all kinds of tools, from woodworking to 3D printers, to laser cutters, etc. to people interested in learning how to use them. For \$50/month, users have access to their space and are able to learn how to use all the tools that HackPGH has. There are also a wide variety of classes that one can take as HackPGH's ultimate goal is to bring people closer to manufacturing jobs.

*What is the maintenance plan for the park?* HackPGH's office is located 2 blocks away from the park, so they plan to monitor it and program it with some of their classes and will work to encourage people to use the park. They are currently exploring a long-term maintenance plan.

*Is there an acquisition plan for the Tot Lot?* While the URA is the potential for adjacent acquisitions, the overall larger plan for the park, which includes the Community Garden, is still coming together. The City is currently working with consultants to develop the plan and integrate HackPGH's proposal into the larger plan.

(2) UPMC Mercy Eye and Rehabilitation Hospital Update: As the Task Force received a presentation several months ago, a brief overview of the project was provided as a reminder. The new Eye Rehabilitation Hospital will be built adjacent to Mercy Hospital. It will include clinical space, research space, and remaining space for future development.

UPMC-Mercy's institutional master plan was passed by City Council in July and they are currently on the Planning Commission's schedule for October 9<sup>th</sup> for a briefing and the 23<sup>rd</sup> for a hearing. They also presented to the Uptown Real Estate Committee a few weeks ago. Construction is set to start at the beginning of 2019 through 2022.

Design renderings were presented and included a new entry and drop off area in another view, a new pedestrian walkway that would connect the Eye Rehabilitation Hospital to Mercy Hospital, and new green spaces. There is also the potential for public art along the side of the new parking garage. The plan includes a new ambulance entrance off of the Boulevard of the Allies.

**Some questions posed by Task Force members:**

*Does the Task Force need to submit a letter to endorse this plan?* The Task Force has never been asked to endorse a plan. Usually, Uptown Partners is involved with approving projects, and their endorsement is usually enough for a project to move forward. The Oakland Task Force does endorse projects with letters, so there is similar precedent. UPMC did not seek Task Force endorsement and noted they requested and received it from Uptown Partners and Duquesne University. Task Force members agreed that an endorsement of this project was not necessary, but this is a topic that should be discussed further at the next meeting to determine a protocol.

(3) Community Sub-committee Work Plan: An overview of ongoing projects, as well as prioritized projects for the upcoming year, was shared with the Task Force. A summary of each project was given for Task Force feedback. The projects and initiatives include:

Ongoing Projects:

- Hiring a neighborhood advocate for the Uptown neighborhood through Uptown Partners
- Working with the URA and the City to coordinate acquisition of key tax delinquent properties
- Preserving the historic character of the neighborhood by preventing demolition of structures that would only be used for surface lots, as well as street preservation.
- Monitoring and addressing illegal dumping and continuing to work with City to create design solutions to address the conditions that promote dumping
- Expanding the community policing and strengthening the existing Safe Streets Uptown Initiative
- Work with educational institutions to expand their research, curriculum and student activities into the community

Prioritized projects for the next year include:

- Promoting programs to support efficiency retrofits and basic systems repair for existing buildings (Healthy Homes)
- Exploring tax policies to prevent displacement and protect home owners from property taxes, especially those who have been in their homes longer than 10 years.
- Exploring the creation of a community land trust to maintain affordability for both residential and commercial properties.
- Investing in public art

Once Uptown Partners completes its strategic planning in the fall, the Sub-committee will have a better understanding of how these projects can be resourced and implemented.

**Some questions posed by Task Force members:**

*Did the Community Sub-committee review the public art submissions?* The Sub-committee reviewed the City’s goals for the project, but a small advisory committee (including two residents) reviewed the RFP responses. This advisory committee was separate from the Community Sub-committee and Uptown Partners.

*When will the Neighborhood Advocate be hired?* Hopefully in January, fulltime. The job posting may be released in October.

**Sub-Committee Updates:**

Development: ELDI (East Liberty Development, Inc.) recently met with Sub-committee members to talk about their work in the community, as well as some of their successes and challenges in re-building a neighborhood. The Sub-committee continues to work with URA to explore strategic property acquisitions. It is also developing a mini website that includes data mapping neighborhood storytelling. Also, a community meeting was held regarding public realm improvements at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Dinwiddie Street. There will be a public meeting in October to review these projects.

Infrastructure: The sub-committee identified and prioritized a project list. The next meeting will be held in the beginning of October in which the Sub-committee will discuss metrics that they should focus on and monitor. At the November Task Force meeting, they will be doing a more in-depth presentation on their projects and work plan.

Mobility: Pashek presented the Colwell Connector trail planning to the Sub-committee last week with positive

feedback. They will present at an Uptown Partners quarterly meeting on September 12<sup>th</sup>. There is a joint sub-committee meeting coming up with the Development Sub-Committee to address concerns related to the many upcoming construction and development projects. The Sub-committee will do some benchmarking of other cities' construction mitigation efforts.

**Member Updates:**

Member updates were circulated via email prior to the meeting.

One addition: Mary Ellen Solomon communicated recently with Allegheny County regarding the Task Force feedback on the Armstrong Tunnel Rehabilitation Project. The County indicated the project is still in the design phase and they are taking into consideration the Task Force's concerns in regard to accessibility, in particular with the sidewalk.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 a.m.

**Next Uptown Task Force Meeting** - 8 a.m. on Thursday, October 4 at The Center for Hearing and Deaf Services, 1945 Fifth Avenue