

Uptown Task Force Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 4, 2020

8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Via Zoom

Present: Roger Altmeyer (UPMC), Dara Braitman (DOMI), Derek Dauphin (City Planning), Gary Desjardins (PPG Arena), Lilly Freedman (URA), Ben Grunauer (PWSA), Bill Generett (Duquesne University), Joan Hilton (Duquesne University), Tracey McCants Lewis (Pittsburgh Penguins), Sean Luther (InnovatePGH/Avenu), Alyssa Lyon (GBA), Mike Madden (InnovatePGH), Breen Masciotra (Port Authority), Christopher Roach (Uptown Partners), Mary Ellen Solomon (Duquesne University), Paul Svoboda (Duquesne Light), Alex Toner (University of Pittsburgh), Marlene Williams (Uptown Partners), Joe Wingenfeld (Uptown Partners), Caroline Woodward (Bethlehem Haven), Megan Ziegler (GBA)

Call to Order/Welcome: Mary Ellen Solomon convened the meeting at 8:05 a.m. with an introduction of all present Task Force members.

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

Agenda Discussions:

(1) Member Updates re: COVID-19 Pandemic:

- **Duquesne Light:** Duquesne Light is debuting a new website that consolidates all the different ways that they can support and help customers during the pandemic, especially those customers in a financial crisis. The website is www.duquesnelight.com/heretohelp. They are also offering financial assistance to business customers as well. Finally, the CEO released a [statement](#) regarding George Floyd's death.
- **Green Building Alliance:** GBA has released [a letter of solidarity](#) regarding George Floyd's death. They are scheduling internal trainings around racial inequality and are starting a book club.
- **Duquesne University:** The University has all of its focus on returning for the fall semester, most likely in a hybrid model of both in-person and remote learning. With this hybrid model, the University is working on an authentic community engagement model to help support the community during the pandemic. The University is also helping with testing at FQHCs around the area, which started on Saturday.
- **Uptown Partners:** UP is in the process of interviewing candidates for the Executive Director position, and may make some decisions at the its Board meeting at the end of the month. In the meantime, the board has taken over many of the ED responsibilities.

(2) Update on Forbes Funds Grant Application: Megan Ziegler stated that Jeanne McNutt had spoken with Forbes Fund and they had suggested that the application should be submitted for their next funding round in July. The financial dashboard has been completed so the application is ready for submission. Uptown Partners will be submitting the application for July 24th, and Duquesne University will submit the online assessment directly to Forbes Funds.

(3) Priority Projects for Funding – Update on Survey Monkey Results: At the March meeting, the UTF asked staff to identify near - and medium – term projects in the EID plan that could be accomplished using the remaining City capital budget funds. The survey results indicated the following are the top projects for further consideration:

1. Use funds to invest in Tustin Smart Block components: park improvements, community garden, streetscape enhancements, affordable housing in adjacent buildings.
2. Increase low-carbon mobility options by investing in infrastructure such as on-/off-street parking and charging for electric vehicles, electric bikes, and/or electric scooters.
3. Establish program that would help connect Uptown and Hill District youth/residents to jobs in the Innovation Economy.
4. Build out slow streets interventions as identified in the plan (mostly in the residential areas east of Dinwiddie Street and south of Fifth Avenue).
5. Work with UTF, Uptown Partners RED Committee, Contextual Design Advisory Panel, and Planning Commission to establish design guidelines for new development in Uptown.

Now that the projects have been prioritized, Derek and his team are looking into the feasibility of each project, as well as who might need to be involved and if there is any work already occurring with any of these projects. He will report back at the next UTF meeting in July.

(4) Development Sub-Committee Work Plan: Mike Madden stated that the Development Sub-Committee worked to re-align their priorities for 2020 that were focused on deliverables and action items. They've created working groups, based on the four goals for this year: diversifying housing options, creating space for innovation, reviving commercial corridors, and implementing policies to promote sustainable and affordable development. The Housing Authority and the URA have been involved in conversations with the housing options working group, and Avenu's platform will be used to move innovation forward. The hope is to make innovation feel more inclusive to residents. Duquesne will re-engage the steering committee on the Fifth Avenue Corridor Plan. The associated RFQ will be distributed to the UTF soon. Finally, as far as the fourth goal of implementing policies, the sub-committee will need to bring in experts to help with these discussions in order to put a plan together.

(5) Community Sub-Committee Work Plan Update: Joe Wingenfeld started his presentation by reviewing the purpose statement of the community sub-committee as well as the list of participants which includes an average of 10 resident participants. For 2020, the group has added four new priorities and has also broken those priorities into projects that they will lead versus projects that they will advocate. The two new projects to lead are organizing a chamber of local non-profits and launching a targeted marking campaign. The two new projects to advocate for are inviting disadvantaged youth to learn innovation skills and advancing the LOOP program to prevent displacement. The metrics for these projects have yet to be determined, and the indicators for the other priorities have remained the same. Joe finished his presentation by going through the schedule for the rest of the year.

Sub-Committee Updates:

- Infrastructure: The group met last week and discussed a renewable energy strategy and will be following up with the 5th and Dinwiddie project as well as Tustin Smart Park.
- Mobility: The group is still working through what the plan calls for and what is actually feasible. They are hoping to present their work plan at the July meeting.

Mary Ellen adjourned the meeting at 9:38am.

Next Uptown Task Force Meeting - 8 a.m. on Thursday, July 2nd via Zoom.