

Uptown Task Force Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 2, 2021

8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Via Zoom

Present: Roger Altmeyer (UPMC Mercy), Derek Dauphin (City Planning), Maya Fewes (URA), Bill Generett (Duquesne University), Leonard Hammonds (Rep. Wheatley Office), Amy Hart (HDSC), Dana Kramer (SEA), Sean Luther (InnovatePGH), Mike Madden (InnovatePGH), Breen Masciotra (Port Authority), Brittany McDonald (Uptown Partners), Jamie Piotrowski (Uptown Partners), Alex Toner (University of Pittsburgh), Mary Ellen Solomon (Duquesne University), Paul Svoboda (Duquesne Light Co.), Megan Zeigler (GBA)

Call to Order/Welcome: Mary Ellen Solomon convened the meeting at 8:05 a.m.

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

Agenda Discussion:

Backbone Support Findings & Recommendations Preliminary Report (Jason Jones and Katie Grimm, J.S. Jones & Still Consulting): UTF members reviewed the highlights of the Consultant presentation:

- a. Survey themes – Community and/or Development as priorities; supporting aligned activities as key focus moving forward; work on affordable housing; traffic and improved infrastructure as most promising projects; need for decision-making process/protocol and better communication
- b. Challenges – leadership transition; waning engagement
- c. Assets – Regional Ecodistricts; supportive and knowledgeable community development sector; award-winning neighborhood plan; members of UTF are valuable
- d. Potential backbone options: (1) UP becomes backbone and convener of UTF with outsourced help, in which EID director will be housed in nonprofit partner and mobility work has TDM coordinator perhaps shared with Hill District and (2) Comprehensive fiscal sponsorship model in which EID manager works as contractor for umbrella nonprofit
- e. Future of UTF – In either scenario UTF becomes “advisory group,” possibly convened quarterly with composition more representative of “community”

Mary Ellen shared with members that Duquesne University supported the consultant’s recommendation that Uptown Partners serve as the convener of the UTF. She noted that Duquesne was asked by City Planning to serve in the convening role four years ago when UP didn’t have capacity to serve in that role. Since then the UTF developed into a forum for participation and collaboration for Uptown stakeholders. While progress has been made and COVID has slowed down momentum, the convening role transition provides an opportunity to evolve the collective effort to meet the changing landscape and to realign efforts to implement the EID Plan. A call for transitioning the convening role to UPP was met with no dissent. DU and UP will meet offline to determine how best to execute an administrative hand off and to offer continued support as UP ramps up for this new role. DU suggested that it could continue to support Zoom capacity, UTF website, space for meetings, and will certainly look for other ways to support the work of the UTF and its Uptown neighbors.

Regarding potential backbone options, Brittany McDonald said that UP wanted to focus on the first option – UP

becomes backbone and convener and works with outsourced resources that may be available from other nonprofit partners. Brittany will talk with the consultants about facilitating conversations with a few key potential partners and will report back to the UTF in October.

Additional considerations as part of the transition: What will UP need to help build capacity for success? How can all members of the UTF help to support this effort? And ultimately what will the group decide about UTF future – advisory role? Frequency of meetings, etc.

In order to wrap up the consultant's scope of work, Brittany will discuss with them providing a final recommendation report at the October 7. She'll confirm that item for next month's agenda.

Member Updates/Suggestions:

Mary Ellen reported that DU continues to convene weekly meetings with utilities, but that there have been some issues over the past few weeks with contractors closing multiple key intersections simultaneously. DOMI responded to a request for assistance by addressing these issues with the contractors. We'll continue to monitor the situation.

Alex Toner shared that Pitt will host its annual block parties, including one for [West Oakland](#).

Sean Luther suggested that BRT representatives should be invited to attend an upcoming UTF meeting to provide an update and continue to build enthusiasm for the project.

Next Uptown Task Force Meeting - 8 a.m. on Thursday, October 7, 2021 via Zoom.