



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

BRONZEVILLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RALPH HOLLMON, CHAIR

Rhonda Manuel, Vice-Chair

Jayne Montgomery Baker, Fidel Verdin, Theresa Garrison,

Christopher Perceptions, and Clifton Crump

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Thursday, December 15, 2016

9:00 AM

Zeidler Municipal Bldg, Room 102 (Fishbowl)
841 N. Broadway

1. Call to Order.

Meeting called to order at 9:12 a.m.

2. Roll Call.

Present 5 - Manuel, Hollmon, Montgomery Baker, Crump and Perceptions

Excused 2 - Verdin and Garrison

Individuals also present in participation:

Timothy McCollow, Environmental Collaboration Office

Deshea Agee, Historic King Drive Business Improvement District

Taryn Webb, 6th Aldermanic District

3. Review and Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes from October 19, 2016.

Mr. Perceptions moved approval, seconded by Ms. Manuel, of the meeting minutes from October 19, 2016. There were no objections from members present.

4. Presentation from the Environmental Collaboration Office regarding the Vacant Lot Improvement Project.

Mr. McCollow gave a presentation and overview on vacant lot projects in the Bronzeville district as a part of the Mayor's Home Grown initiative from 2014 to repurpose city owned vacant lots. Overall there have been 20 vacant lots turned into pocket parks and community orchards in 2015, including lots in the 6th aldermanic district.

There has been a primary effort in 2016 through 2017 to beautify vacant lots on North Avenue from 8th to 27th Street west of the freeway to assist economic development on and change people's perception of the avenue. The effort has been supported by a Zilber grant and collaboration between multiple city departments. Beautification has entailed landscaping to preserve the potential for commercial development on

the vacant lots.

Input is sought from the committee with regards to beautifying three vacant lot sites in the Bronzeville district east of the freeway. The goal is to beautify the lots and leave them available for future commercial development. Plans and budgeting are under development.

The first site is the northwestern corner of 7th Street and Garfield, one main gateway entry into Bronzeville. The land is city-owned and contains much concrete on it. Not included in the site is the privately owned billboard land to the north of the lot. The current thought is to retain most of the concrete as a cost prohibitive measure and install edge landscaping along the sidewalks adjacent to the streets with either tall native grasses or flowering bushes for screening.

Members were asked for feedback on the vacant lot site at 7th Street and Garfield.

Members commented. There should be collaboration with the local artist community to brand the site and Bronzeville as a whole. Such collaboration may produce creative solutions and reduce costs. Perhaps eco-friendly ideas, such as moss signage, can be installed at the site to maximize visibility while retaining the concrete there. Bronzeville-related topiary art through plant sculptures can be placed at the site. The Halyard Park Community Association should be communicated on the project. Maintenance and upkeep of the site are important so that the site does not deteriorate after its beautification.

Members inquired about marketing, outreach, pedestrian traffic, water retention, the adjacent billboard area, and anticipated project date.

Mr. McCollow replied. His office deals with sustainability and landscaping efforts. Public art suggestions are welcome, and others can take the lead. There was no strong resident support for topiary art for the site, but it is possible for other sites. Roses are an option, but they can collect trash. Tall grasses are being recommended and are easier to handle. Neighbors can be approached to participate in an adopt-a-lot initiative to help clean up the site. Halyard Park Community Association has not been approached about the project yet. Outreach has been done with the local aldermanic office, multiple city department staff, and neighborhood organizations. There have been multiple neighborhood meetings through the assistance of neighborhood groups and social service agencies to engage residents. Design workshops have been held at most locations. There have not been mailings done. The site is intended for beautification only and not for pedestrian traffic. There will be no storm water management for the site, but there will be some big storm water management projects in other sites in the area for 2017. His office does not market these sites. The anticipated project start date is the summer of 2017.

Mr. Agee commented. The new RFP is good for momentum. The trees and bushes at the site should be removed. Dumping at the site should be cleaned up. Signs should be setup at the site to promote it. There should be media promotion of the site after its beautification.

Ms. Manual added remarks. She will work closely with Mr. McCollow on this site and others. The strategy is to beautify and enhance these sites to attract developers when marketing them. A new RFP is being developed to go out for this site. Her team is in the process of rebranding and marketing Bronzeville. The RFP for the site will be creative, such as having online virtual tours. The goal is to issue out the RFP for the site in February 2017 and move it forward in the second quarter of 2017.

Clear Channel owns the billboard area and not the city.

Mr. McCollow proceeded to discuss the second vacant lot site on the north corner of 6th Street and North Avenue. Removal of the concrete at the site is cost prohibitive. The proposal is to build over the concrete by installing a boardwalk decking plaza with planters and perennials there. Residents may gather and special events may be held there. Landscaping will be done to screen the sides by the sidewalks.

Members were asked for feedback on the second site.

Members suggested seating, benches, and fire pits for the site.

Members discussed concerns. A plaza may not be suitable at this site since the idea is to beautify the site until development can occur there. A plaza at the site may become a destination for the community, and there may be pushback from residents against future development, which may detract developers. There may be possible loitering on the site requiring no trespassing signs. The comprehensive plan should be revamped, with community engagement, to identify an appropriate site for a permanent plaza for the community to enjoy.

Members questioned zoning for the site.

Mr. Agee commented. He concurs with members' concerns. The lot should be beautified similar to the first site. The site is public land but is under the ownership of RACM. Perhaps a plaza could work for the space next to the laundromat and church in the area, which development may not be ideal there.

Ms. Manuel commented. The zoning is LB2. An organization would be put into place to assist with acquiring permits to support activities at the site. ECO will determine the level of landscaping to install on the site. There was conversation with the ACRE development team for possible development on this site, and they will make a determination by late May next year. There is negotiation for the laundromat in the area to be acquired.

Mr. McCollow replied. Seating and benches would be possible. Zoning would not change. Based from feedback, this site should be beautified. A more suitable space should be explored for creating a plaza.

Mr. McCollow discussed the third vacant lot project site at 5th Street and North Avenue. The proposal is to simply put removable custom-made planters on the edge of the grass lot, each measuring 6 feet long, 24 inches high, and 18-24 inches deep.

Ms. Montgomery Baker said that there is opportunity for local artist installations at this site, such as temporary murals.

There was no other feedback from members on the third site.

5. Discussion on RFP Review Process.

Mr. Hollmon said that from preliminary indications from Ald. Milele Coggs, the committee needs to review and refine its RFP review process to formally use one procedure for consistency. The committee had used one process to review the Garfield School RFP and a slightly different one for the old Ja'Staceys RFP. The committee's RFP review for the Garfield School site is the preferred one from Ald. Coggs, one that was more consistent and comfortable for her.

Ms. Manuel said that the RFP process for the Garfield School site was more procedural and inclusive with an internal review team, community input, and work done in the beginning rather than the end.

Ms. Montgomery Baker said that the committee is still relatively in its infancy with only two significant RFPs that were reviewed. Establishing a singular process is important to reduce the perception of bias.

Ms. Webb said that Ald. Coggs could not attend the meeting today but wanted her to share some of the alderwoman's initial comments. The committee has reviewed RFPs differently thus far. The committee needs to develop a uniform process to review RFPs to streamline the process. The alderwoman has some ideas and wants to share them at a subsequent meeting in more detail.

Mr. Crump said that perhaps DCD can provide its recommendations on the review process. The committee can then review them and provide feedback. Also, review of RFPs should be based on the land uses of the redevelopment plan rather than the ones accepted in the zoning code.

Ms. Montgomery Baker added the committee's review process should differ from DCD's to maintain its own identity. The committee should identify if RFPs should be curated in advance like for the Garfield School RFP or if the committee should look at all RFP submittals like for the old Ja'Stacey's RFP. She prefers the review that was done for the old Ja'Stacey's site, which was more intense. Also, the committee should identify an existing format to work and build off on.

Mr. Hollmon added remarks. The committee should be mindful that DCD and the City have existing extensive review processes. The committee should not duplicate those processes despite some overlap. The committee is only an advisory committee, and there are other formal review processes beyond the committee. DCD and Ms. Manuel should present an outline of the Garfield School RFP review process for the committee to review and share with Ald. Coggs for her feedback. Then a final document can be developed subsequently on the review process. The review procedure is a substantial task that will require multiple discussions for the committee. The committee should facilitate the input of Ald. Coggs since this body was created by her.

Ms. Manuel said that she can provide outlines of both processes used by the committee thus far as well as some outlines of other RFP processes used by other community development agencies.

Members unanimously agreed that for the next meeting Ms. Manuel and DCD will provide outlines of the committee's RFP review processes used thus far as well as external ones for the committee and Ald. Coggs, with her in attendance, to review. Ald. Coggs would then provide further feedback on the outlines as well as her own ideas. The committee would then subsequently proceed with producing a final guideline for one review process.

6. Agenda Items for the Next Meeting.

Lucia Lozano, First Stage, appeared and inquired the committee on assisting with the promotion of the "Welcome to Bronzeville" play, occurring from January 13 through February 5, 2017 at the Todd Wehr Theater, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts.

Mr. Hollmon said that discussion of the play can be discussed further in detail as an agenda item at the next committee meeting.

Items for the next meeting:

- *Discussion on the committee's RFP review process with Ald. Coggs in attendance, if possible.*
- *(DCD) Ken Little discussion on the proposed ACRE Program Project in Bronzeville.*
- *Garfield School project site tour update from Mr. Perceptions and Ms. Montgomery Baker.*
- *Discussion with First Stage relative to promoting the Welcome to Bronzeville Play.*

7. Set Next Meeting Date and Time.

Wednesday, January 11 or Thursday, January 12, 2017 at 9 a.m. based on a majority of members attending.

8. Adjournment.

*Meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.
Chris Lee, Staff Assistant*