

**CITY OF NORWALK
PLANNING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 15, 2013**

ATTENDANCE: Nicholas Kydes, Chairman; Douglas Hempstead, David McCarthy, Warren Peña, Bruce Kimmel.

STAFF: Norwalk Redevelopment Agency: Mary Grace Weber.

OTHERS: Norwalk Housing Authority: Curtis Law; Candace Mayer.
Gayle Epp, EJP Consulting; Eva Erlich, Trinity Financial;
Steven Heikin, Icon Architecture;
Eric Rains – Eric Rains Landscape Architecture

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and stated that the members as listed above were in attendance, and that there was a quorum present.

Mr. Kydes stated that the objective of the meeting was to have a review of the Washington Village Transformation Plan, and wanted to begin with opening remarks. He stated that there was a walk-thru this past weekend, and it brings to life the impressive design that gets away from the old barracks style. He added that this development is one of the oldest in the state and possibly the nation, and the objective of the plan is to bring it up to standards of the 21st century that will be a jewel of the City.

Washington Village South Norwalk Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Plan

Ms. Mary Grace Weber, Special Projects Manager with the Redevelopment Agency introduced members of the agencies in attendance and gave an overview of the background of the Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant for a comprehensive plan to transform and revitalize the Washington Village neighborhood. She explained that this plan lays the framework for sustainable mixed-income development that will transform Washington Village into an economically diverse, high opportunity neighborhood that will serve as the basis for the implementation of the grant to carry out the project funding as outlined in plan

Ms. Candice Meyer outlined the plan as a comprehensive roadmap that focuses on the four components of housing, neighborhood, people and education. The plan calls for:

- Replacing the existing 136 public housing units with 273 units that will include 50% public housing, 25% workforce housing and 25% market rate units.
- The plan proposes 23 key strategies by which to achieve the goal of creating and sustaining access to opportunity to all households who reside, or will reside, in the

Washington Village/South Norwalk neighborhood.

- These include housing strategies to replace the public housing units one-for-one in the South Norwalk neighborhood

The presentation was jointly given by Gayle Epp and Eva Erlich who fielded questions and comments from the members on housing quality, levels of poverty, safety, access to open space, variety and vibrancy of shops and services, access to high-quality schools and jobs. Ms. Epp highlighted the characteristics of this area of South Norwalk as it exists today and the rest of the Norwalk community and detailed the range of coordinated strategies for making improvements in quality of life for Washington Village and South Norwalk residents.

Highlights of the plan included charts and schematic renderings, and questions and comments were fielded on the following segments: the target site and housing and neighborhood strategy, education component, implementation and budget, and executive summary. Ms. Erlich reviewed the objectives and the strategies as follows:

- A key objective is to create a sustainable mixed-income community with public and non-public housing units Design new development in accordance with Transit-Oriented Development design guidelines.
- This community engagement and planning process has been going on for the past eighteen months and started before the planning grant was awarded and will continue through the implementation phases to come.
- Serving as the basis for this shared vision for the new South Norwalk community is taken from the mission statement:
 - To provide open housing opportunity for all in a safe and welcoming neighborhood, for businesses along Washington and South Main Streets that want to be part of a thriving commercial district, for service providers seeking better ways to connect with those in need, and for children and their parents who want high-quality learning experiences that will serve as the foundation for personal growth and economic opportunity.

Following the presentation, Mr. Hempstead asked questions and comments that he would like to have addressed:

Timeline: Is there an envisioned timeline for each phase?

Pricing: Is there an estimated range of project costs for infrastructure?

Ryan Park: Is there a sustainable maintenance plan?

Financing: Assumptions for rent/purchase options and market predictions.

Repair Fund: Is there a set aside or unit reserve for repairs?

Demolition Strategy – Is there a sequence plan for building, tear down phases?

Building Look/Design/Quality –Examples of materials to show the quality?

Ms. Weber noted that these areas would be addressed in further detail at the next meeting as part of the next steps of the presentation of the recommended plan.

Mr. Pena asked about the duplication of efforts with the NEON Community Center and Ms. Meyer explained that the intention is to create more of a learning center or a resource center as part of the education component. Mr. Law added that they plan to have an open House held at NEON prior to the public hearing.

Mr. Kydes thanked all of those involved with this plan and stated that this is the product of a city-wide planning effort that has involved Washington Village residents, the Norwalk Housing Authority, City Departments, the Redevelopment Agency, Norwalk Community College, the Board of Education, and representatives of numerous churches and community organizations.

Mr. Kydes noted that there will be Public Hearing on May 1, 2013 at Side by Side Charter School at 7:00 p.m. to receive public comment on this redevelopment project. He referred to the notice provided in the agenda packet.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Knox;
Telesco Secretarial Services