

West End NRZ Working Plan Public Hearing
June 12, 2001
Stephanie Woodlock, Facilitator
Michelle Drain, Secretary

Sign In Sheet attached. 65 Attendees

NRZ Committee Members included: Julie Carroll, Bill Breetz, Eddie Hagenbach, Mike Stahl, Gerry Maine, Pierce Hopkins, TPA Consultant
Copies of pages 43-52 on priorities were distributed, and priority ranking sheets. Complete copies of the plan were available.

NRZ planning began in September 1999. /requirements of the NRZ are to create a plan, present the plan to public, submit it to city hall. This process legitimizes our voice with the city and state government, and provides access to funding not otherwise available.

Meeting format:

NRZ committee member provides overview of each priority on the handout. Meeting notes include Q&A and comments, not a restatement of the handout.

Questions and discussion.

Meeting attendees note their priorities and indicate what they are willing to work on.

I. Recreation, Arts, and Education

Speaker: Stephanie Woodlock. (Committee representatives all had commitments involving recreation or education in the West End this evening.)

Q: Julie Carroll – Have potential sites for the center been identified?

A: Stephanie - Yes, but none have panned out. Rejected was a site on South Whitney that was purchased for an elderly day care center, and the building on the corner of S Whitney and Warrenton that went to public auction, but was bought back by the owner. A search is in progress

Q: David Ionno - Has city Parks & Rec. Department been talked to?

A: Stephanie - Yes. Also city and state representatives

Q: Chris Larsen-Nelson - Is a contingency focusing on the arts? No action items are listed.

A: Stephanie - No specific recommendations were made regarding the arts. It could be added to the plan if people want to work on it.

A: Marlo Marrero- Arts are included in the wish list for the community center

II. Improve Educational Facility

Speaker: Val Carrier

In addition to educational factors, the condition of the Noah Webster School building is deteriorating. It is time for people to act now if they want to see the school restored rather than torn down. Parents need to get involved in the PTA, and all neighbors need to get active to save the building itself.

Comments:

David Ionno - Has kids at Noah Webster & Hartford High. People have fought hard to keep music and instruments at Noah Webster, and now the school may become a model for music and arts. David goes to the Board of Trustees meeting each month, and knows that we can get things done, and drive change. It takes pressure and participation.

JoAnne Bauer –Education is central to keeping people in the neighborhood, to property values, and to the quality of life. It can't involve just parents – it has to be all of us.

Q: Rafe Podolsky - How does the presentation apply to point II? How does the threat of demolition of the building fit into the NRZ; what is the process of commenting and incorporating comments?

A: Carl Dudley - Comments and discussion items from both presenters and individuals will be documented.

A: Val Ferro (NRZ Consultant) The plan has some specific goals and action items. Individuals at the meeting are adding comments and discussing detail not in the written plan. Procedurally, we are creating a broad plan to go through the approval process. Details and specifics will be fleshed out in implementation.

Laurie Rollins – Noted that Noah Webster has an alumni association that was set up a couple years ago.

Added to topic II is Restoration of the Academics (includes honors, classical magnet, gifted and talented programs)

III. Promote Our Historic and Cultural Traits

Speaker: Stephanie Woodlock.

In the West End, there are many institutions, including churches, and five designated historical districts.

- 1 Past studies can be used as a basis for future brochures tours
- 2 CREN is very interested in working on a study
- 3 Neighbor programs will be ongoing, and a number of events already go on

#III needs to be written onto the priorities ballot – it's missing.

IV. Strengthening the Neighborhood

Speaker: Gerry Maine

- 1 We have 5 sectors, each with a representative, and a network of block captains. Sector reps meet regularly; block captains meet twice a year. Using this network, 2800 flyers are distributed regularly. We need to make this system work better.
- 2 David Barrett heads the Communications Committee, and is effective at getting news and rebuttals into the newspapers

V. Traffic/Traffic Calming

Speaker: Pierce Hopkins

Handout: Traffic Calming and Neighborhood Beautification, with examples of traffic calming measures and statistics

- 1 Pierce's presentation has already been seen by many residents and block groups
- 2 Improving traffic issues will require residents input and action, not just "support"
- 3 The traffic committee has been meeting since last September. Locations for improvement are being identified, and as more people get involved, the prioritization process will begin
- 4 Traffic changes provide an impetus for slowing traffic, and encourage automobiles cutting through the neighborhood to choose another route

Audience had no questions or comments

VI. Public Safety

Speakers: Officer Debbie Scates, Luwanna Johnson-Tucker

The CSOs, Debbie and John Bremser, are back on the streets after 6-week nursing home strike. Hartford has had 11 homicides this year – WE is in best shape as far as crime. Block Captains should attend the Public Safety meetings and report back to their blocks.

The West End had good turnout at the citywide public meeting regarding city accountability for common concerns: L&I, Public Works, Policing, Financing, Fire Department. Next meeting – with all department heads will be early August.

To report active crimes and concerns call 911 or dispatch at 527-6300. Don't call the office or Debbie or John's pagers for immediate action

To get other issues added to WE Hot Sheet, call the office at 722-8308

Debbie welcomed individual questions and discussion about specific concerns at the back of the meeting room.

VII. Housing

Speaker: Bill Breetz

- 1 Most opportunities relate to single family homes
- 2 Audience had no questions or comments on this item
- 3 Involves regulatory matters, primarily Farmington Ave, and some other spots
- 4 Public Safety is also working on L&I issues
- 5 Rent receivership program – a Receivership Bill was passed by the legislature this year, with Barnaby Horton's support, as well as the mayor's and the state's. There was a statute that had not been implemented, so the bill was to recognize that, and enable action. The bill involves criminal penalties for owners who do not take care of their property, and do not pass inspection. Three days notice is given that problems must be fixed, repairs made. Some buildings on Sisson Ave are likely targets. The NRZ action related to this issue could involve block groups helping owners address the issues with their properties. Other landlords on the committee could also share information to help each other and new owners.

Q. Julie Carrol - (Housing Committee Member) Is there a status update on the Goodwin Estate? Where is the process with the city?

A. Bill Breetz The Goodwin Estate is included in the appendices of the NRZ report, and removed from the main body of the report.

- Presentation was made to WECA
- Meeting of Woodside Circle residents with the developers (some like none of the plans and want to keep the meadow.)
- The expense of building renovation has built up the density of the proposed buildings

Q. Phil Will - Is there a forum for providing input into the process?

A. Bill Breetz – Whatever proposal is adopted will require a zone change. The neighborhood will have to support the zoning change or it will die.

Q. Rafe Podolsky Goodwin proposals spell out the precise density. Where does conversation on this take place? When the Strategic Plan is adopted by the city council, it becomes an ordinance. When that happens. Some of the specifics may become legal requirements.

- A. Carl Dudley We should take these seriously as issues we want to pursue.
 Gerry Maine We shouldn't get too specific in the plan yet, but keep it general, along the lines of WECA supports residential use as an R8 zone.
- Henry Link – Mentioned the CEB \$5,000 program for multi-family housing rehab. John LaBell has applications. It takes about a year.
- Eddie Hagenbach 181-183 Sisson renovation process is lengthy. It would be better to educate owners that don't know what they are supposed to do, and use programs that help people out and allow them to stay in the building while problems are being corrected.
- Bill Breetz – That's a policy we should support. There isn't a way to enforce it.

Farmington Avenue Joint Committee

Speaker: Marlon Lindsey

Stephanie Woodlock advised that Farmington Avenue is a major project in the neighborhood, and important part of the NRZ plan. Timing did not synch up perfectly to get everything into the strategic plan, and FAJC as gathering information and the NRZ plan was being drafted. Jill Barrett, project manager, will contribute action items to the final NRZ plan.

Gerry Maine added that FAJC is mentioned several times in the NRZ plan, just not in detail.

- Consultant, Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has presented their findings to the FAJC board, and to a group of business owners. PPS did interviews, surveys, and looked at existing records. Some details:
 - 7,000 cars use Farmington Ave, compared to 17,000 in the 80's
 - 7% chance you'll be stopped going downtown because traffic isn't managed properly.
 - Lanes are blocked, buses impede right turns
 - Bus stops are not optimally placed – they range from 50 – 1500 feet apart. Only 6 sheltered.
 - How do people reach the avenue? 28% walk, 42% drive, 3% bike, others bus or unknown
 - Ave is 1.6 miles, includes 22 intersections, 12 with signals.
- The study covered 5 areas: Transportation; Business & Retail; Urban Design and Zoning; Enhancing Institutions and Landmarks; Image.
- Some problems: lack of sidewalk continuity, parking lots, cars, separation of sidewalks from storefronts, sidewalks not wide enough.
- PPS is coming back to the community with recommendations and ideas. Meetings are being planned for July 25 at St Francis, with sessions at both 2:30 and 7:00 pm.
- **Please attend** They need people to come out to hear what's going on.
- www.fajc.intranets.com A summary of the study findings is here.
- Call Marlon for more information at 232.2007

- Carl Dudley – Farmington Ave is one of our greatest assets, and greatest liabilities
 Phil Will – The phase just completed was data collection. Next is review of alternatives and options.
- Q. JoAnne Bauer – Could this be more publicized, e.g. via block captains?
 A. Marlon – Jill Barrett is working on a communication plan, and it will be thorough.

End of NRZ meeting notes.