

~ MEETING SUMMARY ~  
**EAST GATEWAY STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP**  
**February 12, 2009, 6:00 p.m.**

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**Location:** Achieva Credit Union, 1499 Gulf to Bay Boulevard

**Attendance:**

<i>SAG Members:</i>	Duggan Cooley Dr. Gilbert Jannelli Donna Maxa	Sandra Lyth Joanna Siskin R. Smokey Townson
<i>SAG Alternates:</i>	Shelley Kuroghlian	
<i>City Staff</i>	Tammy Vrana (Economic Development & Housing) Corey O'Neil (Development & Neighborhood Services)	Dan Bates (Development & Neighborhood Services) Corporal Conyers (Police Department)
<i>Others:</i>	Linda Mignone (Achieva)	

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### 1. Past Meeting Summary

The December 11, 2008, SAG meeting summary was accepted without changes.

### 2. Downtown/CHIP Bike Team

Corporal Carl Conyers, representing the Police Department's Downtown/CHIP Bike Team, introduced his unit and himself to the SAG. He noted that the Bike Team had day and night shifts. He identified two new officers on the team (officers Jakes and Eaton) whose positions are funded through an interlocal agreement between the City (Police Department) and the Community Redevelopment Agency and provided an update on the East Gateway Prostitution Mapping Program.

S. Lyth asked if any of the Downtown Bike Team officers speak Spanish, and learned that Officer Illich had this capability. S. Kuroghlian said she noticed an increase in Police activity in East Gateway. SAG members commended Corporal Conyers and the rest of the team on the positive, visible change observed in the neighborhood.

Dr. Jannelli asked how many new "No Trespass" affidavits had been signed and if affidavits were accepted from residential property owners. T. Vrana estimated that six affidavits for commercial properties had been received since June 2008. Corporal Conyers agreed with S. Townsend that certain residential properties, such as Homeless Emergency Project (HEP) had submitted affidavits. J. Siskin said that community members had canvassed businesses to solicit interest in the "No Trespass" program and that the Police Department paid for the signs. She added that lack of participation had nothing association with lack of outreach.

Dr. Jannelli asked about the appropriate action if a vagrant is found sleeping on private property. Corporal Conyers advised to call the Police to handle the situation. S. Townsend said

that vagrants with arrest warrants are arrested. Corporal Conyers added that one could be arrested if caught sleeping in a park. Dr. Jannelli said that the City of St. Petersburg has been tightening their rules addressing vagrancy and that Clearwater should coordinate with St. Petersburg to learn about their strategy. S. Kuroghlian said that the Police “full court press” on Coachman Park has had very positive results. J. Siskin added that she had seen the Police working at night.

### **3. East Gateway District Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy**

T. Vrana informed SAG members of the remaining public comment period for the proposed East Gateway District Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS). She reminded the group that the NRS, which is essentially a repackaging of the East Gateway Action Program, would allow greater flexibility when spending federal Community Development Block Grant funds in East Gateway. The proposed NRS will be considered by City Council at a public hearing on March 5, 2009.

### **4. Soup Kitchen & CHIP: Should there be an effort to relocate outside East Gateway?**

*Note: The SAG requested this topic be made part of the February meeting agenda to get a pulse on member opinions about East Gateway facilities that serve the homeless.*

J. Siskin started the discussion by questioning why the city pays for a police officer to check identification at the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen. She felt that St. Vincent de Paul should cover the expense. S. Townsend said the Soup Kitchen is not interested in moving and that he had heard Councilman Gibson say that the homeless were attracted to downtown because of nonresidential areas and superior social services

S. Lyth wanted to know about the community’s issues with the homeless. “Vagrants” (chronically homeless) and their impact on residents, businesses and property owners in East Gateway was a common response. S. Kuroghlian said that the best programs addressing the chronically homeless are based on behavior modification. The biggest issue with the Soup Kitchen is that it has no rules (e.g., allowing clients to hang around before feeding). Soup Kitchen administrators do not take responsibility for the actions of their clients, a stance that has polarized the community. She said that at least a “middle of the road” response from the Soup Kitchen was needed. S. Lyth asked if there was a perceived difference with CHIP clients. The SAG felt that CHIP clients are not the problem.

J. Siskin said that differences lie in the way homeless facilities are run and the way the Soup Kitchen is run is a problem for the community. S. Kuroghlian said there was merit in the services being provided but the behavior of clients is at issue. Without behavior modification, the same issues will continue no matter where the services are located and good neighborhoods will suffer as a result. She added that progress is unlikely with the same players and that the discussion would be better served at a level with a less passionate, single-minded focus. She suggested the Diocese because it issues directives on operations.

S. Lyth asked if a Soup Kitchen representative could be part of the SAG. Dr Jannelli said the Business & Neighbors Association (BNA) had a Soup Kitchen committee and that Soup Kitchen representatives agreed to come to SAG and BNA meetings. In his opinion, Pat Farmer, Soup

Kitchen Board of Directors Chair, doesn't know about the impacts and opinions of the community but would listen to a plan, if presented. He asked, "How do we get a model of what is working and present to the Board of Directors?" He added that the Diocese regional structures differ and that lawsuits have gotten attention in other locations.

S. Kuroghlian suggested that a message about neighborhood impacts need to be conveyed, especially those that have effects on daily lives, economic development and sense of security. She said that the SAG should talk first at that level and perhaps engage a subcommittee to work with the community.

S. Lyth said that real solutions would require more than Soup Kitchen, CHIP and SAG participation and offered that the City's Economic Development & Housing Dept, Pinellas Coalition for the Homeless and others would need to come together around a plan. She went to say that the key to addressing chronic homelessness is to get people off the street. Since "chronics" are frequently sent to jails and hospitals, we should consider the true costs of "housing" the homeless in these facilities (she referenced a reported cost of \$14 million a year in Pinellas County). We need to first address the root of the problem. Hospital costs exist because sicknesses are inevitable when a person continually is exposed to the elements, lacks of food, etc. Chronics, who often self-medicate with drugs and alcohol, often end up in jail for criminal and ordinance violations. If resources housing and services were provided, these people could be engaged slowly back into society.

D. Cooley said it's not just the Soup Kitchen that attracts the homeless but more so urban centers, concentrations of people, and parks with bathrooms. The chronically homeless are not going to leave downtown. D. Maxa said some of the homeless do not want help. S. Townsend said that some vagrants are swayable but the hard core ones are not.

S. Kuroghlian spoke about the distinction between being homeless and being a vagrant. She said there are programs for rehabilitation and resolving bad behavior, but what were talking about is rule followers vs. rule breakers. "What about the people who pay taxes and want quality of life," she asked. S. Lyth said she understood people are sick and tired of "what is," but short, medium and long-term solutions are needed. She offered that there needs to be a plan, not a fight with between agencies (police, hospitals city). She thought the SAG was well rounded enough to approach these agencies.

Dr. Jannelli said there seemed to be no coordination between the agencies providing services. He asked about the County's 10-year Plan to End Homelessness and political and financial approaches observed by the City. S. Lyth said the 10-Year Plan included a bed space commitment by cities and the county. The plan looks to "pockets" not "megaplexes" to house the homeless. She continued that Clearwater should step up because it has the largest problem. Dr. Jannelli said other cities send the homeless to Clearwater and if you build centers here, then more homeless will be attracted to them.

S. Kuroghlian said that it's easy to make a decision for a community being destroyed if they are not your issues. It's easy to be magnanimous but see what you would do if the problem was in your yard. Residents should have a right to make the choice. The East Gateway's voice is developing and is asking the City Manager to get in there and clean it up.

D. Cooley said that housing would need to be somewhere but not necessarily in East Gateway.

G. Jannelli concluded that this “volcano” is preventing economic development in East Gateway. You can clean up your property but it’s a mess quickly afterward. You can’t get tenants. How do you combat that?

## 5. Updates

- a. **Façade & Building Lot Improvement Program.** Information was provided on the proposed program and scheduled public meeting for discussion by City Council and the Community Redevelopment Agency.
- b. **Sidewalk Projects.** Property owner lists were provided to the Business & Neighbors Association for use during petition drives (51% of the property owners on a block must provide consent for sidewalk construction).
- c. **Sunday Ciclovía.** Volunteers were solicited. Achieva Credit Union was thanked for their Gold Level sponsorship.
- d. **Business & Neighbors Association.** The BNA is meeting on a monthly basis and has established four subcommittees (Promotion, Membership, Infrastructure and Soup Kitchen).

**Next SAG Meeting:** June 11, 2009, 6:00 pm at Achieva Credit Union

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:05 p.m.