

~ MEETING SUMMARY ~

EAST GATEWAY STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP
June 11, 2009, 6:00 p.m.

Location: 2nd Floor Conference Room, Clearwater City Hall, 112 S. Osceola Avenue

Attendance:

<i>SAG Members:</i>	Rich Levy, Vice Chair	Donna Maxa
	Dr. Paul Guidi	Joanna Siskin
	Dr. Gilbert Jannelli	R. Smokey Townson
<i>SAG Alternates:</i>	Shelley Kuroghlian	E.R. "Betsy" Cruikshank
<i>City Staff:</i>	Tammy Vrana (Eco Dev & Housing)	
	Doreen Levy (Business)	Clark Seabloom (Resident)
<i>Others:</i>	Elvira Morgan (Resident & Business)	Mrs. Guidi (Business)

1. Downtown/Beach Gateway Feature

T. Vrana presented the city's conceptual design for the *Downtown/Beach Gateway* project. The project is part of an ongoing redevelopment effort in downtown, which includes three phases of Cleveland St (and Gulf to Bay Blvd) streetscaping. The gateway project is located at the intersection of Gulf to Bay Blvd, Court St and Highland Ave, and is the terminus of the third phase of the streetscape project. The gateway project design consists of both aesthetic and safety features. Aesthetic elements include street trees (oaks) and landscaping, decorative entryway signage, obelisk-shaped monuments, public art and colorized faux brick crosswalks. Safety elements include crosswalks at all five legs of the intersection and right turn lane modification with directional signage on westbound Gulf to Bay at Highland Ave. The estimated project cost is \$1 million to be funded with Penny for Pinellas dollars.

The SAG raised the following issues and suggested solutions:

- **Safety Issue #1:** Overhead directional signage and lane configuration at westbound Gulf to Bay Blvd approaching Highland Ave results in a high incidence of "last minute" lane changes, creating the potential for vehicular crashes.
 - **SAG Recommendation:** Add "Alternative Beach Route" to overhead directional signage to give indication the downtown route that the beach can be also reached via.
- **Safety Issue #2:** No clear sight of pedestrian crosswalk on Highland Ave from westbound Gulf to Bay Blvd.
 - **SAG Recommendation:** Add "Alternative Beach Route" to overhead directional signage to give indication that the downtown route also leads to the beach.

The SAG approved a motion to support construction of the Downtown/Beach Gateway project with the design solutions noted.

2. East Gateway “Vision”

T. Vrana described the East Gateway District in terms of its context as a mixed use district comprising 39 percent of the downtown area in a mid-sized city of 110,000. The district has low to medium urban development intensities. Major transportation corridors are characterized by underutilized and obsolete commercial buildings. Nonconforming properties are the rule rather than the exception.

Community input to date indicates a desire for widespread improvement to the district, including redevelopment of commercial and residential areas. The SAG was asked to if they were supportive of a community visioning exercise to determine preferences for the future “built” environment in East Gateway. T. Vrana directed everyone’s attention to handouts of artistic renderings of redevelopment scenarios in East Gateway. The renderings were created for use in a brownfields marketing brochure currently under production by Economic Development & Housing staff. Discussion ensued, revealing some preferences for future development in East Gateway:

- Mixed use development
- Business and residential development that supports a “24-hour” environment where people frequent (“eyes on the street”) and discourage vagrants and drug activity
- Wide sidewalks in business areas that facilitate urban activity and pedestrian movement
- Parking behind buildings and within structures
- Increased density/intensity that create incentive for private sector investment
- Relaxing “the rules” that are impediments to infill development and redevelopment
- Welcoming street level environment (not like Station Square Condominium)
- Street furniture
- Less stringent sign regulations

The SAG approved a motion to support a community visioning process for the East Gateway District.

3. SAG Vacancies

T. Vrana informed the group that SAG members Clyde Griffin (Lifework Yoga) and Shelly Graves (resident) had resigned from the SAG leaving two vacancies. SAG members were asked to nominate persons from the SAG Alternate list to fill the vacancies. A motion was made to invite Ms. Maryce Garber, an East Gateway resident and member of the East Gateway Business & Neighbors Association, to fill the “resident” vacancy. A motion was made to invite Ms. Elvira Morgan, an East Gateway resident and business owner and member of the Hispanic community, to fill the “business owner” vacancy. E. Morgan, who was present at the meeting, accepted the position. T. Vrana will notify M. Garber of the nomination.

4. Updates:

- Multicultural Event.*** T. Vrana informed the SAG of the outcome of “Sunday Ciclovía,” East Gateway’s spring multicultural event. While diverse population groups and visitors from outside the neighborhood and city attended the event, the event did not attract

enough people from East Gateway or overall to justify a second event. The event did not fulfill its primary objective of bringing the East Gateway community together in the planning and hosting of a neighborhood event but it has captured some attention from special interest groups (e.g., car-free streets and cycling advocates) across the nation and in other countries. Staff will continue to consult the community on ideas for future events.

- b. Sidewalk Projects.** There are six new sidewalk projects in various stages of community approval and design.
- c. Façade Improvement Program.** The city will begin accepting applications on June 20, 2009.
- d. Business & Neighbors Association.** J. Siskin said that the Police Dept was working with the BNA on establishing a Police Volunteer Program in the East Gateway (including specialized training and a patrol vehicle). Crime watch organizations were being assembled and a neighborhood walk is in the works. She said the number of recent reports written for the East Gateway was the highest in the city. The BNA is working on an approach to persuade the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen to change certain policies that could affect the center's impact on the neighborhood. A new director has instituted changes to the rules of conduct at the St. Petersburg soup kitchen. The BNA wants those rules extended to the soup kitchen in East Gateway.

5. Meeting Location

It was decided to hold future SAG meetings at City Hall. Thanks were extended to Dawn Dixon for graciously hosting SAG meetings at Achieva Credit Union over the past year.

6. Other Discussion

D. Jannelli asked about the number of "No Trespass" affidavits issued in the neighborhood. J. Siskin reported on the Police Department affidavit drive in 2008 and free "No Trespass" signs offered to East Gateway business owners.

The group discussed problems with absentee landlords and communication problems when code violations had been issued. D. Jannelli suggested that both the property owner and tenant be apprised of the violation.

S. Kuroghlian suggested that the city look into having a "Neighborhood Audit" done for the East Gateway District by Clearwater Neighborhood Housing Service. T. Vrana will report back to the group.

Next SAG Meeting: August 13, 2009, 6:00 pm at City Hall (2nd Floor Conference Room).

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.