

~ MEETING SUMMARY ~

EAST GATEWAY STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP
October 2, 2008, 6:00 p.m.

Location: Achieva Credit Union, 1499 Gulf to Bay Boulevard

Attendance:

SAG Members: Duggan Cooley Rich Levy
Dawn Dixon Sandra Lyth
Claude Griffin Joanna Siskin
Donna Maxa R. Smokey Townson

SAG Alternates: Shelly Kuroghlian

East Gateway Task Force: Tammy Vrana (Economic Development & Housing) Dan Bates (Development & Neighborhood Services)

Others: Linda Mignone (Achieva)

1. Welcome & Introductions

T. Vrana announced the first meeting of the East Gateway Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) and welcomed the SAG members, SAG alternates and others in attendance. T. Vrana introduced herself as a member of the East Gateway Task Force and the program manager of the East Gateway District Five-Year Action Program. All in attendance introduced him or herself and indicated their relationship to East Gateway, vision for East Gateway and what they consider to be the neighborhood's greatest challenge.

	<u><i>East Gateway Vision</i></u>	<u><i>Greatest Challenge</i></u>
J. Siskin	A destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Crime (prostitution & drugs); St. Vincent de Paul soup kitchen
R. Levy	An alive and inviting place that attracts visitors by being culturally unique	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Less customers since bridge opening▪ Businesses don't have a prayer now that traffic is routed to beach via Court Street
D. Maxa	A destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Needs cleaning up
D. Dixon	An environment that is safe for workers to walk to lunch or dinner and for children to play	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Needs a face lift▪ Eliminate blighted hotels where drug use and crimes occur
C. Griffin	A comfortable and connected place that contributes to the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Vagrants▪ Isolation from the rest of the City▪ Image (name)
S. Lyth	A multi-ethnic place that brings interest to the City, and where people feel ownership and are involved in their community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Communication▪ Cooperation from all stakeholders, including Hispanics
D. Cooley	A community that serves people with dignity, respectful of	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Dark and depressing at night

	<u>East Gateway Vision</u>	<u>Greatest Challenge</u>
	community and neighbors	
R. Townson	A place where people feel safe outside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elderly and handicapped fearful of leaving homes at night
S. Kuroghlian	Basic quality of life 24-hour environment with people on the street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safety

2. East Gateway District Five-Year Action Program FY07/08 - FY11/12

T. Vrana provided an overview of the approved Five-Year Action Program. The SAG was informed of their role in providing guidance and feedback to the East Gateway Task Force on Action Program projects and initiatives.

T. Vrana discussed the public involvement component of the Action Program and asked the SAG to provide comments on a draft of the Public Involvement and Communications Plan that will be used during implementation of the Action Program.

Recent Action Program accomplishments were reported including:

- New police patrol in East Gateway
- New street lighting on Missouri Ave
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) process for development review
- New East Gateway liaison in the Building Division
- Landlord/tenant laws seminar
- Quarterly East Gateway briefings with development review staff
- May 3rd neighborhood clean-up
- May 5th Code sweep
- New trash cans in litter “hotspots”
- Awareness campaign for black barrel & recycling programs
- Coordination with Hispanic businesses
- Bilingual communications (Guía de Diversión)
- Multicultural “Back to School” celebration

The presentation prompted several questions and comments. S. Townson said he noticed new streetlights on Franklin Street in East Gateway. S. Lyth suggested that the order of Cleveland Street Streetscape phases be changed so that the phase in East Gateway (Phase 3) would be started sooner. This would allow construction when there are fewer businesses that would be disrupted and the area would be upgraded sooner, stimulating new investment, new businesses and commerce. There was resounding support for this idea.

S. Kuroghlian added that the time to do streetscaping is now when business in the area is dead, not later when small businesses are more apt to be up and running. S. Levy said that streetscaping would increase the appeal of the area. S. Lyth stated that there didn’t seem to be much going on in the section where Streetscape Phase II is planned (Myrtle Ave to Missouri Ave). Streetscaping sooner would better showcase existing businesses and new investments, such as the Greektown Grille.

J. Siskin reminded the group about a consultant that advised the City to initiate the streetscape in East Gateway rather than in the downtown core. She suggested a roundabout at juncture of Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard and Cleveland Street.

C. Griffin commented that their needs to be more City investment in East Gateway -- if only a fraction of the money that has been spent elsewhere in the City. R. Levy suggested that East Gateway's diverse businesses make the area unique and should be celebrated and promoted to attract visitors/customers.

T. Vrana discussed current work on design concepts and cost estimates for a decorative gateway feature and intersection improvements at the Five Points intersection. The gateway feature project was first identified during Action Program development as mitigation for reduced traffic volumes from relocation of SR 60 outside East Gateway (result of new bridge). The Task Force intends to present the project to the CRA for consideration and funding. Design concepts will be presented to the SAG for input.

S. Lyth stated that safe routes to school are a big concern for East Gateway families. Neighborhood children are not far enough away to be bussed to Skycrest Elementary and must walk across or around Crest Lake park or along Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard. She suggested that this may be an issue to prompt Hispanic families to be more involved in the community. She added that the Hispanic Outreach Center serves an estimated 2,700 clients from this area of Clearwater.

S. Kuroghlian commented on the numerous streets in East Gateway that have little or no sidewalks. She suggested that sidewalks and lighting projects are potential quick action projects that would have much impact.

The Action Program discussion prompted input on the neighborhood's ongoing homeless issue. Because there are different reasons and associated attitudes about the homeless, J. Siskin asked that the group use the term "vagrants" to distinguish the chronically homeless. Homeless persons and families that are intent on seeing their way out of homelessness (e.g., C.H.I.P. clients) are not viewed as the problem in East Gateway. S. Lyth suggested that East Gateway's homeless issue requires a thorough discussion to dispel misconceptions and arrive at potential solutions. She and D. Cooley suggested asking George Bolden to speak on to the SAG or a larger audience on the topic. S. Kuroghlian expressed that East Gateway should not be viewed as the center for serving the needs of the homeless (e.g., future shelter space). T. Vrana distributed the minutes of the 9/16/08 C.H.I.P. Board of Directors meeting that described a presentation by Bill Horne, City Manager, on the East Gateway Action Program and the City's concerted effort to resolve homeless impacts on the neighborhood.

3. Public Involvement Plan

SAG comments were solicited on a draft Public Involvement Plan distributed at the meeting. Comments can be voiced at the next meeting on 12/11/08.

4. Election of Chair/Vice Chair

The SAG elected the following officers:

- Dawn Dixon, Chair (Achieva Credit Union)
- Rich Levy, Vice Chair (Rich Limousines and T-Shirt Warehouse)

5. Future Meeting Times/Locations

Future meetings will be held bi-monthly on the second Thursday of the month at 6:00 p.m. at Achieva Credit Union, 1499 Gulf to Bay Boulevard. The next meeting is December 11, 2008.

6. Other

A draft community survey was distributed to the SAG for input on content and the value of surveying the East Gateway community (the survey had previously been distributed at the Mexican Independence Day Event on 9/14/08).

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.