



New Bern Housing Authority and the City of New Bern

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS PLANNING GRANT **Trent Court/Craven Terrace/Greater Five Points Neighborhood**

Economic Development Working Group

Tuesday, June 9 at 4:00 pm

Stanley White Rec Center, 901 Chapman St.

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Cindy Blot, Melvin Cooper, Bruce Simmon, Roger Bellamy, Deedra Durocher, Bill Brennan, Susan Namowicz, Joe Mansfield, Jamara Wallace, Vernon Guion, Timothy Downs, Ron Cox, and Jim Bisbee

Handouts: Agenda, Minutes from May 26, 2015 meeting, updated revised Strategy Matrix, Community Day Results Graph

Review of last meeting minutes: Approved without changes

General Discussion:

- Cindy Blot introduced Timothy Downs, Economic Development Director for Craven County and Vernon Guion who were invited to our meeting.
- Mr. Guion explained he has been working with young people in the CN community to gain work skills and get jobs for the last couple of years. He is also one of 24 members of the local Elks Club who are working toward renovating the Lodge building at 921 Main Street into an active Community Center pending access to funding. C. Blot mentioned there are funds available for façade improvements if that was of interest.
- Mr. Downs explained he has two responsibilities: one as ED Director for the County which is focused on attracting industrial/manufacturing companies to Craven County and the other as Executive Director of Craven 100 Alliance which takes a more holistic approach to economic development throughout the County. R. Bellamy mentioned a textile manufacturing company that might be interested in locating here and would like to discuss this further after the meeting.
- Questions were raised as to why the Accelerator was taken off the revised Matrix as a goal/strategy and only the Workforce Development Center was listed. It was discussed that the Accelerator was taken out due to concerns of its location out of the CN boundaries and was something the City was pursuing directly regardless of the CN planning. C. Blot noted that this effort now has name – The Entrepreneur Center of Craven County, TEC(3). There was a strong feeling that the Accelerator should remain listed on our Matrix because of its relevance to our overall economic goals and support of entrepreneurs in the community. A vote was taken to approve returning it to the Matrix. There is a meeting scheduled tomorrow afternoon at the Chamber for those who are serious about being entrepreneurs or mentors, and while anyone from this committee is welcome to attend, it isn't meant to be a general public meeting.
- The results of our group's presentation at the Community Day last week were discussed. With 75 respondents to our list of Strategies, we had the most response of the eight committees. It was important to get this input from the community and the results were somewhat surprising. There was discussion on the Marketing Program strategy getting only a 40% rating and it was felt by some that the question and the focus of the marketing effort were misunderstood. R. Bellamy noted an earlier

- discussion about “branding” the CN community to market businesses within that area to the residents of that area and he will pursue how this can be done effectively. After discussion of marketing and branding and the need to be clear about what each of those terms means, the group encouraged R. Bellamy to involve community residents and bring a preliminary proposal back to our committee.
- J. Mansfield noted the obvious priority on the graph was the 71% rating for a strategy to “Raise skills, education and workforce levels.....” and that really needs to be our focus in coming meetings. There was discussion of a number of organizations, churches, and other groups that were working on some aspect of this same goal and the question was raised as to why these entities were not coming to our meetings to share and offer input. The Uptown Business & Professional Association was discussed as a key organization especially since they are successfully running a computer service training program for people from the community. Dawn Baldwin-Gibson has provided a list of other groups in New Bern we should be contacting to work together on our list of goals for more comprehensive and effective results. C. Blot asked everyone to send her information on any group(s) we individually are aware of that we might include as a partner or at least initiate communication about our role in this planning process. She also suggested we check the website for the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation (www.zsr.org) to see the kind of work they are doing. Perhaps that will be a source of funding a project we might propose in the future.
- C. Blot once again stressed that funding from the Planning Grant that will be submitted on behalf of the CNI in August does not guarantee funding for any economic development strategies. The funds will be directed primarily to improve housing although it is critical that economic development, as well as the other sub-committee’s recommended strategies are included as part of the Grant. That does not mean we can’t, and in fact we should, seek outside funding from private, non-profit and public entities so we can initiate some of our proposed projects. M. Cooper noted the amount of mistrust that exists in the CN community and the reasons why. There needs to be a more regular and realistic communication with the community about what we and the other committees are doing. It was agreed that while all the information on the CNI program is on the City’s website, including all the subgroups’ information and meeting minutes, this has not been an effective means of communicating what’s going on.
- M. Cooper asked what will happen to our committee after the August report is prepared and a Plan is submitted to HUD. C. Blot noted that there will be an Economic Development Council formed within the City for all six wards and we could obviously have important input to that Council. It was agreed that our committee should continue, with M. Cooper suggesting we make this a motion for a vote at our last meeting in July.

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, June 23 at 4:00 pm at the Stanley White Recreation Center