

CDBG Priority Task Force
Meeting 8: Thursday August 14, 2008
7:30-9:00am Room 209, 2nd Floor City Hall

Attendance: Denis Lachman, Co-Chair, Wendy Harmon, Larry Gross, Frank Gallagher, Rhonda Juneau, Jeannemarie Celentano. By phone Anna Priluck and Shalom Odokara.

Staff: Mike Bobinsky Director of Public Services, Kathi Early Lead Engineer, Steve Early Operation Manager, and Tom Civiello Director of Parks and Open Space, T.J. Martzial HNS Director, Rachel Talbot Ross Equal Opportunity & Multicultural Affairs Director, Amy Grommes Pulaski, HCD Program Manager.

Introduction

Amy thanks everyone for coming and has everyone introduce themselves.

Highlights Previous Meeting: Economic Development and Housing

Amy provides a brief overview of the highlights from the previous meeting. Guests included Greg Mitchell, from Eaton Peabody, and Chris O'Neil representing the Chamber of Commerce. Housing guests included Roger Bondeson from PROP and Bill Glover from Mainehousing. There were a few take-a-ways from that meeting.

The Economic Development highlights included investing in larger projects, but less projects to maximize impact. Leverage investment from the private sector by investing in infrastructure to compliment that investment. Invest in the level needed to complete a project. This means fully funding to the level to get the project done. Invest in whole city blocks to have a larger impact. Coordinate with neighborhood planning, involved the neighbors to participate in the process. The goal is to invest significantly enough to have a visual change of the landscape- in other words create a "windshield wow factor."

From housing TJ highlighted the fact that Portland spends 7% of CDBG funds on housing, while nationally municipalities spend 70% on housing. Bill highlighted the fact that housing development is economic development. Also everyone discussed the energy efficiency needs of the older homes in Portland.

Roger Bondeson provided some short and long term housing needs, based on his many years experience in and around Portland. Short term needs include: weatherization, fuel assistance, heating system repair and replacement, housing counseling, and financial literacy. The longer term needs are similar- weatherization, elderly rental housing, special needs and accessible housing, repair or replace substandard housing, conversion of heating systems to use other fuels besides oil and housing counseling combined with financial literacy.

Overview of Public Infrastructure Funding

Amy explains the years of funding that have gone into funding both sidewalks and parks through Public Works and Parks requests. These have been two separate departments until now. This year they have combined. You can see that there has been over \$5.4 million spent on Public Work projects and over \$2.6million on Parks projects over the last ten years. These have been spent primarily on the peninsula, because this is the eligible area.

Public Services

Mike thanks the group for adjusting their meeting time to meet their schedule. Mike introduces himself as the new director of Public Services. Steve Early is the operations manager and manager of the construction projects. Tom Civiello is the parks and open space manager. Kathi Early heads up engineering, contracts and technical assistance.

The Department has emerged as Public Services, from the Department of Parks and the Department of Public Works. He says that the requests will be combined as one, from the department with multiple requests within. When Amy invited us to speak, we were invited to talk about where we've been and how where we are going. The recent evolution in the last few years, we used to bank roll funds to accommodate enough funding to complete a project. We would see funds from multiple years. This would give us enough money to do a project. One of the reasons we did this was to balance councilor needs and sidewalk needs. Based on direction from CMPAC and others we started requesting more money to fund a project completely and finish it. This is moving us a little in that direction. Mike says that if you look at 2009 if you look at parks and public works request was about \$1.5 million. What was funded was under \$600,000. The question for us is: how are those other unmet needs addressed (meaning the sidewalk and parks needs)? The shifting of those projects to the CIP is challenging and limited as well. There are other funding demands on the CIP, such as library, combined sewer overflow etc. We can talk specifically about projects that weren't funded, such as sidewalks and parks. We have acquired more projects, without more equipment. He would be interested in getting more equipment, such as a snow plow that could be arguably used for public safety. It's a way to meet maintenance needs within an entitlement area.

The prioritization process refers to the five year plan that takes us to 2012. It includes sidewalks predominantly, curb ramps, street improvements. They are focused on hardscape improvements that increases personal mobility. On the Parks side, there was a needs assessment that was created. Among other take-a-ways was the need to provide more neighborhood parks. A second major area is internal workings with Councilors and constituents. These requests range from tip downs for mobility and sidewalk requests. We are looking to enhance our relationship with the Bike-Ped groups, disabled community, and other kinds of mobility needs. The Department of Public Services have reached out to special interest groups. Kathi has worked and helped staff the Bike-Ped Committee. It's been a good partnership. Those are some of the areas of how we garner priorities.

Mike explains how we are re-allocating funds for Powsland Street to Sewell Street.

He offers some ideas of improvements for the program, one being the district meetings. They are intended to be a placeholder for how to get citizen input on where to invest CDBG funds. They have not always been directed to what the needs are. They have a strong relationship with the neighborhoods and look to these meetings for feedback.

Kathi says there are a few things that the department needs, one being audible safety ifor intersections. Storm water management is an ever increasing need in the city. Many of the eligible areas would be candidates for storm water management. The Dpeartment may be looking to this fund to maintain buffer zones around storm water projects. She says that the funding sources are co-dependent. She does mention the Madison Street project which took many years and many funding sources to complete.

She says another issue is the current timing of Neighborhood meetings in November. She would prefer a spring time line. They must provide their requests for the application process in November, and there is not enough time to have the neighborhood meetings in November.

Tom mentions from the Parks needs assessment. He noticed that many of the requests for neighborhood parks were in the non-eligible areas. There is a great network of parks on the peninsula. But off the peninsula there are fewer parks, some needed parks might be near schools.

Steve says the combination of the departments have caused collaboration.

Jeannemarie arrives and Rachel Talbot Ross arrives soon after.

Mike says that as look at the infrastructure we have the transportation meeting. The idea of working to complete a street is something they are working on, including street, sewer, sidewalk, paving, traffic calming etc. combine it together. One example of that was at Woodford's street. Funding issues will drive that decision. That is something that is on our agenda.

Frank asks to see a copy of the Parks and Public Works five year plan and a Parks Needs Assessment. Mike says the five year plan can be. The parks needs assessment is on the city website.

Larry asks if Mike has a sense if he has a sense of total impact on an area. There are some areas in the city where that is already going on, like Ocean gate and Bayside, where you are combining housing and infrastructure together. Is there a list of projects where you can braid all these items together? For example if we had a list we could see.

Mike says that we have annual capitol improvement gathering of departments. There is collaboration with the utilities, and also with the Planning Division for Project Review. We have that ability through a variety of resources to look at that. A consequence of that is the issue of how far we spend our dollars. In the past we bank rolled projects, and as a result less funded projects. We could work on the development corridors.

Larry says that everything is timing. When's the best time to inject CDBG money to close the gap or move the project forward. Mike says the eastern waterfront. As those projects evolve we identify who's paying for what.

Bill says there is a comprehensive plan that identifies areas for housing and infrastructure improvement together. One example is Bayside. The City developed parcels for the development community. They were planned as part of the master plan redevelopment measures. Alex says that we have not targeted CDBG funds to augment investment in the planned areas in the past. However there are a number of places for investment that could be funded with CDBG in Bayside. He talks about Bayside and the funding sources in a variety of areas. We have met with Tom and Mike to talk about how we can coordinate our requests with the Bayside, for sidewalks etc. It is a patient planning process. He says what if we accelerated it by investing all the resources we have, such as using CDBG, there could be a visual change to the landscape.

Wendy says that is what one of the things the task force is interested in looking at is 3-5 year funding for a particular project or in a specific area. She says if we could focus the investment in Bayside, as opposed to spreading it thin there would be a noticeable impact.

Bill says that we have a transportation needs that many of the identified needs will likely be in the entitlement areas. He says that projects that could be funded are bus lanes or bus shelters.

Denis says there are a few models of investment that we are considering here: 1) spreading the dollars thinly over a larger area, 2) concentrating investment to make an impact, or 3) addressing needs. He says that any of those models could work. It looks that both Planning staff and Public Services staff are all interested in exploring those different models. He asks Bill about the master plan and the transportation plans. Would sustainability plan may be another lens? Bill says that the Sustainability Report is an evaluative lens. You would use it as a way to look at individual projects through the lens of sustainability. Many of them would also be covered under transportation or economic development.

Mike says one consequence of investing in these things is, as Larry mentioned, is banking. You would be seeing investment without result, just dollars. That's how it was done in the past.

Amy explains that HUD does not favor banking because it holds money that could be used for other projects. In fact if you hold the money too long, HUD will take it back. Instead it is better invest a larger sum of money in a larger project, rather than funding several smaller projects.

Alex says there are ways to utilize that concept in Bayside. For example, there are some funding sources for the Bayside Trail, but not necessarily for the streets or sidewalks leading to the trail. There is a lot of development around the trail that is needed. You could augment some of the larger project with smaller CDBG funded projects. It would compliment or leverage other funds. This could give more weight to the big anchor projects. The private development is going on, why not link those things together. Pearl Place was required to build sidewalks around their projects, but then they end. If you invested around the projects in 3 or so years you could be done in that area and move to the next.

Anna says she understand that the CDBG funds are used for public improvement and also used to fund positions in planning. . She asks, has there been any coordination or partnership in utilizing funded planners to help create the Public Works five year plan? Alex says that when there are major planning projects, there is coordination between the departments. But there probably could have been more coordination for that.

Mike says that their plan was developed based on projects that were not funded, or where they saw the need.

Alex says there are transportation plan and other larger plans that there was coordination.

Shalom says there seems to be some assumption of where the funds have been going. It sounds that the decision has already been made, she'd like to make the point that the decision has not been made. We are hearing from different people to help us make our decisions.

Mike acknowledges her comment. He also says we have also benefited from unique projects that have been funded. One of them is the boat ramp on Cliff Island. Before, there was no boat ramp, we used a beach to load and unload garbage, recyclables, etc. One day the private beach owner said no, we could no longer use the beach. CDBG helped to fund a concrete ramp that was extremely useful last spring in removing brush after the Patriots Day storm. Bill says was a sustainable project for Cliff Island.

TJ says that he is glad Mike brought it up because we don't want to focus our funding strategy so tight that there is not room for projects like Cliff Island.

Wendy says with asphalt being in the news, does the city have a new policy? Is the cost affecting CDBG projects? Mike says yes. We are repairing streets still on our list. The remaining contract

is finishing. With asphalt prices as they are we may re-bid in late winter. He doesn't think we are seeing an impact with CDBG projects. Many of the projects within the city are brick or concrete. Steve says oil is driving the price of everything, including bricks and concrete.

Anna says one of the pressing needs the group continues to notice is the cost of energy and transportation. How can we use CDBG funds to help improve alternative transportation or energy issues? Mike says with regard to public infrastructure we may have used CDBG to create bike lanes throughout the city. It goes along with our complete street initiative. That's how we are dealing with energy issues. The whole of pedestrian mobility within the entitlement zones has been a staple, sidewalks, tip downs, primarily in brick. Improve mobility and lessen dependence on cars. Overall, the city is looking at energy companies to retrofit the buildings.

Bill says that it is a good opportunity to look at this now. The transit study may have short term results. As we evaluate transit METRO is evaluating route changes. There may be short term needs as buses change routes. As you put busses on new streets, there are no bus shelters. The two public feedback comments we get as to why people don't use buses is 1) they aren't frequent enough- which can be addressed by changing routes, and 2) it's uncomfortable- they are standing outside in the rain, cold etc. this could help to be addressed by shelters.

Anna asks about the controversial brick ordinance. Should we be spending valuable CDBG dollars on expensive bricks? Mike says there are some people in the neighborhoods and in regard to historic preservation that would oppose changing the required brick ordinance. He continues that the cost of asphalt is increasing, as is concrete and brick.

Shalom asks about the cost rising. What are we going to do, because the cost would always go up? That is a huge concern. Mike responds that one of the ways that the department is addressing this issue is that we are trying to use in-house staff to do projects. That way we would only charge materials, overtime and equipment to the projects. However when we request the projects, the estimate is based on full contractor prices. Steve mentions there is normally 10% contingency to offset increase of costs. Mike says that in-house resources is a way to cut down on increase costs.

Anna asks the staff what is affecting people in the entitlement areas the most? Not necessary in regards of Public Works, but as the citizens as a whole. Steve says the handicap ramp project. By far the request we get most is sidewalk repair and handicap ramps.

Bill says that having attended some of the METRO route analysis meetings, mobility is huge. There was testimony for hundreds of folks where minor route changes caused mobility challenges for them.

Wendy says they received \$70,000 last year how far will that go? Steve says since it costs considerably less for staff to construct the ramps as opposed to a contractor, we are working on building the ramps in-house. Wendy asks what would be left? Steve says there is not a comprehensive list. Wendy asks for that list when it's ready. Steve says it will be an evolving list. Mike says as they are doing complete streets they are installing handicap ramps even outside the entitlement zones. We have to follow ADA compliance guidelines. So we will address the areas that are not compliant. Wendy says with all the new development, there may not be much left for handicap accessibility on the peninsula.

The meeting ends. Mike says he will email Amy a copy of the Five Year plan and the Needs Assessment.