

**Rockford Choice Neighborhoods**  
**Task Force Meeting Summary – June 27, 2012**  
**Rockford Housing Authority Offices**

*Purpose:* To report on the results of the June 26<sup>th</sup> Community Meeting, the working vision that emerged from that session and to begin to organize working groups around the six identified strategic initiatives – 1) education, 2) focus on youth, 3) income and jobs, 4) engagement/capacity building, 5) safe, healthy neighborhood, and 6) physical improvements.

**Presentation and Discussion**

Les Pollock and Adam Rosa from Camiros reviewed the PowerPoint presentation and results of the keypad polling exercise that will help to focus the physical planning directions. The working vision that emerged from the community meeting was also reviewed. During discussion concerning the level of participation it was noted that most of the participants were homeowners; approximately 20% of the group were renters. Despite RHA outreach efforts, no Fairgrounds Valley Apartment residents attended the community meeting. There was preliminary discussion concerning more effective ways of engaging RHA residents in the planning process.

Perhaps the biggest surprise that emerged from the community meeting was the identification of sidewalk improvements as a major issue and project priority. Sidewalks are an essential element of the transportation network. The poor sidewalk condition in the neighborhood appears to be used as an excuse for people to walk in the streets. There was also consensus that it was important to address housing condition and then move on to sidewalks and other public realm improvements.



Adam Rosa and Les Pollock present an overview of the Community Meeting results, including input on the strategic initiatives, results of the keypad polling exercise and draft neighborhood vision

## Priority Ranking Exercise

Task Force members were asked to review the draft vision statement and strategy and project ideas for each of the strategic initiatives and to “vote” using \$15,000 in “Ellis Heights/Fairgrounds Neighborhood Bucks” (the same format used at the community meeting) to indicate the relative importance of each strategic initiative. The results of the Task Force and Community Meeting resource allocations are shown below:

Strategic Initiative	Task Force		Community Meeting	
	Dollars Allocated	% of Total	Dollars Allocated	% of Total
Income & Jobs	\$57,000	20%	\$97,000	23%
Safe, Healthy Neighborhood	\$59,000	21%	\$86,000	20%
Education	\$54,000	19%	\$75,000	18%
Physical Improvements	\$50,000	18%	\$73,000	17%
Focus on Youth	\$38,000	13%	\$58,000	14%
Engagement/Capacity Building	\$27,000	9%	\$31,000	7%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$285,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$420,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

The community residents ranked “income and jobs” over “safe, healthy neighborhood” while the task force ranked “safe, healthy neighborhood” slightly above “income and jobs” – otherwise the rankings for both groups were the same.



Task Force members review the strategies and project idea results from the Community Visioning Session and vote their priorities using “Ellis Heights/Fairgrounds neighborhood Bucks”



### **Improving Community Outreach**

It was noted that both groups had allocated the lowest dollar amounts to “engagement/capacity building” but that much of the discussion by the Task Force was focused on how to get more neighborhood participation in the planning process, especially by RHA residents. Additional meetings at Fairgrounds Valley are needed. The meeting locations need to be a place where people feel safe and that are easy to get to. Even though the RHA had provided transportation for Fairgrounds residents, there may be a greater comfort level if the meetings were held at the RHA community center. However, residents from other parts of the Ellis Heights neighborhood may be less likely to attend. The importance of establishing one-on-one relationships with RHA residents to encourage participation was stressed. It was noted that during the West State Street corridor planning process there was good participation at meetings held at Crusader Clinic, which was viewed as “neutral” turf. There was consensus that outreach efforts need to be continued and expanded.

Suggestions for improving neighborhood participation in the planning process included press releases and articles in local papers concerning upcoming meetings and flyers distributed in the neighborhood prior to meetings and planning events. The importance of building relationships and trust was highlighted. Relationships are crucial to building neighborhood capacity.

### **Working Groups**

The next phase of the planning process is to create working groups around each of the strategic initiatives to refine strategies and identify projects for inclusion in the neighborhood revitalization plan. Task Force members were asked to indicate their working group preferences. A project idea sheet (attached) was also distributed for use by the working groups. The intent is for the working groups to meet over the summer and to have a full list of projects to present at a community meeting in the fall.

## ELLIS HEIGHTS/FAIRGROUNDS CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN PROJECT WORKSHEET

Projects suggested for inclusion in the Ellis Heights Choice Neighborhood Plan should respond to the following criteria:

- Projects that will address the most pressing needs of Ellis Heights residents and have a meaningful impact on their lives;
- Projects that can be completed or well underway in the next 5 years;
- Projects that address multiple issue areas;
- Projects that an organization is willing to take the lead on implementing;
- Projects that are sustainable, have a lasting impact and/or stimulate other improvements;
- Projects that can leverage funding.

PROJECT PROPOSALS		
<b>Project Idea:</b>		
<b>Issues to be Addressed:</b>		
<b>Anticipated Outcomes:</b>		
<b>Proposed Lead Agency:</b>		
<b>Potential Partners:</b>		
Proposed Time Frame (Years)		
1	2-3	4-5