

Neighbors Learn About Eastside Reinvestment Plan

By Jennifer Herrera - Contributing Writer/Southside Reporter

Date: 06-25-09

The Carver Community Cultural Center was packed on a recent night with Dignowity Hill residents, along with city officials, to discuss the new Eastside Reinvestment Plan.

The meeting was the community's first opportunity for input for the reinvestment plan, which will cover the Dignowity Hill, Healy-Murphy and St. Paul Square areas, or around one-square mile within the East Side community.

"Of the three historic East Side districts, the Dignowity Hill neighborhood would be most affected by the Eastside Reinvestment Plan," said San Antonio senior city planner Rebecca Paskos.

"The Eastside Reinvestment Plan is part of the Community Development Strategic Plan adopted in 2008, sets community development goals targeting reinvestments in the communities."

The meeting explained to residents what exactly a reinvestment plan is, while also showing residents that the plan would improve their neighborhood.

The plan is available for public input and following the informational part of the meeting, residents were asked to break out into groups to share their thoughts on the neighborhood's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Residents recommended improving parks and cemeteries and adding walking trails. Some members of the community also said East Side neighborhoods in general face infrastructure issues, as well as crime and prostitution issues.

Residents also expressed concern with any property tax increase. Paskos said officials are looking into tax relief for the historic districts affected by the reinvestment plan.

One of the city's development goals is focused on increasing residents in the East Side and downtown areas, especially around Fort Sam Houston.

The city's plan also includes commercial revitalization, park improvements, infrastructure, and implementing a street planting program.

We also want to see Houston Street become a commercial corridor," Paskos said.

The Eastside Reinvestment Plan is proposing to partner with various East Side groups, including the Dignowity Neighborhood Association, San Antonio for Growth on the Eastside (SAGE), San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA), COPS/Metro Alliance, and the City of San Antonio.

Paskos said that the reinvestment plan won't be "a long drawn out process."

This month city planners intend to organize more planning meetings and also work on solidifying partnerships with franchising sources.

Paskos estimated that if the planning team makes all their deadlines and presents the plan at the Community Development Summit held in September that the rezoning process can start as early as October and end by November.

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