



MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting: Westside Community Meeting – Haven for Hope Area Neighborhoods

Date: August 27th, 2019

Time: 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Location: St. Agnes Catholic Church Parish Hall, 825 Ruiz Street, 78207

Attendees:

Planning Department: Bridgett White, Director; Rudy Nino, Assistant Director; Chris Ryerson Planning Administrator; Ana Villarreal, Senior Planner; Iris González, Special Projects Manager

Lead Facilitator: Linda Ximenes, Ximenes & Associates, Inc.

Haven for Hope: Gary Chance, Vice President of Transformational Services

Other Departments Represented: Development Services; Human Services; Neighborhood and Housing Services; SAPD SAFFE and Haven for Hope Officers

Community Attendees: 90 community members signed in to register for the meeting. Most attendees indicated they lived, owned property, or owned a business in the 78207 zip code, while a few attended from 78201, 78202, 78204, 78210, 78212, 78228, 78231, 78237, and 78240 zip codes.

The Planning Department invited members of the three closest registered Neighborhood Associations: West End Hope and Action; Prospect Hill; and Historic Westside Residents Association, as well as all Westside Community Area Planning Team members. In addition, a post card announcing the meeting was sent out to approximately 7,100 addresses in the area, and St. Agnes Catholic Church included information about the meeting in their weekly bulletins.

City Council Offices: Haven for Hope is in Council District 5, and the neighborhoods nearby are in Council Districts 1 and 5. Both District offices were made aware of the meeting, and Planning Department Staff reached out to see if one or both Council Members would be in attendance. Unfortunately, neither office was represented at the meeting.

Meeting Purpose and Background

The Planning Department hosted this meeting as part of our work on the Westside Community Area Plan, which is a long range plan looking at a variety of topics, including land use, urban design, transportation, community amenities, and housing and economic development strategies over a 10-15 year time frame. The meeting was held in response to a request from several of our Westside Community Area Planning Team members to better understand the challenges faced by neighborhoods in the area around Haven for Hope. Our objective was to have a broad conversation about health, safety, and community wellbeing in the area – hearing directly from residents and business owners.

In addition to Planning Department staff (including Director, Bridgett White and Assistant Director, Rudy Nino), Gary Chance, the Vice President of Transformational Services at Haven for Hope, and representatives from the City’s Department of Human Services, Department of Development Services, and Neighborhood and Housing Services Department attended. The Police officers that attended were there because of their experience working as SAFFE Officers in the community or at Haven for Hope.

Planning Department staff visited Haven for Hope the week prior to the meeting to better understand the operation, the array of services it provides, and the range of people it serves. While Haven for Hope does not turn anyone away, and there is no need to qualify, there do appear to be a number of the

homeless population that do not avail themselves of the services Haven for Hope provides and who may be causing many of the significant problems cited by area residents and business owners.

We recognize that Haven for Hope is the most visible institution related to these issues, and certainly needs to be a part of the conversation, but we also hope to better understand larger trends and challenges that affect the area which may not be directly related to Haven for Hope and the services it provides. Our intention was certainly not to pit area residents and business owners against the vulnerable homeless population nor against Haven for Hope itself. Rather, the meeting was envisioned as a community conversation, so that the Planning Department staff could hear the reflections and experiences of homeowners, business owners, residents, and employees of the near Westside, as well as any constructive ideas attendees had about how we can proceed in a more positive way that helps the community long-term.

The Planning Department is well aware that one community plan is not going to “solve” the many interrelated problems associated with homelessness, nor the underlying causes including unemployment, medical issues, drug abuse, domestic violence, or mental and emotional challenges, among many others. However, we hosted the meeting to better understand the scale and nature of the challenges, and to help identify how our long-term plans can contribute recommendations that may help the area in the long run. While many other departments and agencies must coordinate effectively to address the range of challenges identified during this meeting, the Westside Community Area Plan will include recommendations related to:

- Land use;
- Physical improvements and investments that create safer public spaces and better activation of the area; and
- More effective coordination or expansion of existing programs and services that address challenges to community wellbeing.

Meeting Format

The meeting began with brief introductions and an overview of objectives and meeting format. Chris Ryerson from the City’s Planning Department reviewed the meeting purpose and outlined how the community feedback would be used in the Westside Community Area Planning Process. In particular, it was explained that the Planning Department and the Sub-Area Plans like the Westside Community Area Plan and the Downtown Area Regional Center Plan cannot effectively address issues that fall under the purview of other departments such as Police or Human Services. However, the Plans can address issues related to land use, urban design recommendations, improvements and investments in physical amenities or infrastructure that help create safer public spaces, and improvements or programs that help better activate the area.

Next, Gary Chance, Vice President of Transformational Services at Haven for Hope provided an overview of Haven for Hope’s mission and services.

Following the introductory comments, lead facilitator, Linda Ximenes of Ximenes & Associates described the process and intended outcomes of the breakout sessions, and organized the participants breaking into four groups, one in each corner of the room to work through a series of questions with a facilitator. One group was conducted in Spanish. The discussions were recorded on large flip charts at each of the four breakout stations.

After approximately 40 minutes of breakout group discussion, the facilitator from each group reported back to the entire room on their groups’ three most important concerns and three preferences for



addressing them.

The full transcription of breakout group comments and written comment card comments can be found at the end of this summary. Following is a summary of main themes and most common comments from the breakout group discussions.

Breakout Groups Discussion

Most important concerns of the community

- Safety / unsafe
- Safety / crime / drug use and drug dealing
- Dirty / waste and trash
- Haven for Hope as an attractor/concentrator of services
- Property values are hurt by having Haven for Hope in the area
- Lack of City response
- There is a lack of political will to help the Westside
- Negligence to this community (focus is on the homeless, not the residents)

Preferred ways of addressing noted concerns

- City budget
- Business development
- Do not concentrate social services/programs (including for drug and alcohol abuse and halfway houses) in the Westside
- Better prevention of homelessness to avoid increasing need
- Haven for Hope should have more control over residents
- A more dispersed model of homeless and other social services
- More transparent City communication and engagement
- Better communication from the City – better response and action
- Track positive outcomes
- Better Code Enforcement and Police presence
- Improve street lighting
- Provide more trashcans
- Mitigate noise pollution (especially from the trains)
- Close Pik Nik and other businesses that serve alcohol
- Community organizing
- Encourage more community members to be leaders and City Council members of these districts to be more involved in their needs

Other ideas that could inform recommendations in the Westside Community Area Plan and the Downtown Area Regional Center Plan

- Address vacant lots and abandoned or dilapidated buildings more effectively
- More responsive and effective code enforcement and nuisance abatement
- Increased City budget for Westside amenities (recreation center, swimming pool)
- Programs and investments to increase average incomes in the community
- Better training and employment opportunities for homeless
- Address areas under bridges and along creekways and trails
- Consider how development and gentrification on the Westside will affect Haven for Hope (especially larger institutions looking for additional land)



- An analysis/research is needed to show whether the Haven for Hope model is more/less successful than other service provision models (dispersed services) [mentioned by every group]
- Research best practices related to concentration vs. dispersion of social services, agencies, and organizations
- Was a community impact study ever conducted after Haven for Hope was established to assess the impacts on the area?
- The jail (and the whole ecosystem around it) also need to be considered in this conversation
- Impacts on VIA service, businesses in the area around VIA Centro Plaza
- Impacts on redevelopment potential of important assets like the Scobee Building
- Address certain parks, creekways, and greenway trails that are attractors to undesirable activities
- Address general concerns about safety on neighborhood streets
- Can the area get enhanced Police presence and more speedy responses?
- Tax deduction or other mitigating strategy for residents of zip code 78207

Next Steps

To facilitate the development of relevant recommendations, the Planning Department is continuing a dialogue with the Human Services, Development Services, Neighborhood and Housing Services, and Police departments to better understand the range of ongoing and planned initiatives related the real challenges identified by the community at this meeting. Planning Department staff will continue to work with these departments, relevant agencies, and the project Planning Teams to develop actionable recommendations to include in the Westside Community Area and Downtown Area Regional Center Plans that may help guide future investments, programs, and policy recommendations.

In addition, on October 17, 2019, City of San Antonio City Council approved a Department of Human Services project to conduct a comprehensive **Homeless Strategic Plan**. There will be several opportunities to provide input and participate in this plan - if you are interested in doing so, please contact Morjoriee White in the Department of Human Services at: Morjoriee.White@sanantonio.gov or (210) 207-8197.

If you have questions about the Westside Community Area Plan project, please contact Project Manager Chris Ryerson, City of San Antonio Planning Department.

Email: chris.ryerson@sanantonio.gov

Phone: (210) 207-7833



WESTSIDE COMMUNITY AREA PLAN MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2019
GROUP 1

Question #1- Where do you live or work in this area? Not the address, but the neighborhood, street name or business. Everyone in the group responds with a quick answer.

- Arbor (6 people)
- Home next to Haven for Hope
- San Marcos
- In laws on San Marcos
- Rounds and Menchaca
- W Commerce
- Delgado
- Buena Vista
- Martin
- El Paso
- 36th Street
- Maria Elena Street
- Ruiz Street
- Merkens
- Leal
- Perez
- Last Roulee [?]

Question #2 – What benefits do you think Haven for Hope brings to the community? How has Haven for Hope helped the community?

- Knowledge of where sex offenders are
- Helps families come out of poverty
 - Where do graduates go?
- Community impact of multifamily development (visual)

Question #3 – What health, safety and wellbeing impacts do you experience in your neighborhood?

- WDC Plan Implementation status?
- Eminent domain for vacant structures for homeless services
- Lots on Leal Street – status?
- Drug use in neighborhood
- Theft and vandalism
- Free services for homeless, not residents
- Concern for mother-in-law
- Trespassing
- Residents not callous, but concerned with concentration in neighborhood
- Poplar/Sabinas – no stop signs or lights
- Issues moving into greater Westside
- Asking for money on private property



- Zoning violations

Question #4 – How do you think those impacts could be addressed?

- Police patrols
- Income in the community
- City budget focus on Westside
 - Recreation Center
 - Swimming Pool
- Better responsiveness from City
 - Nuisance abatement
- Address property under bridges

Question #5 – What other organizations or agencies could assist in addressing these concerns?

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Question #6: How can the City and other entities be accountable to the community to address the concerns we heard?

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Indicate the three most important concerns for them and their three preferences for addressing them. Emphasize that all of their comments will be considered, but we want to know what are the most important for them.

Three most important neighborhood concerns:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Ways to mitigate the concerns:

1. City Budget
2. Business development
3. Do not concentrate social services/programs (including for drug and alcohol abuse and halfway houses) in the Westside



WESTSIDE COMMUNITY AREA PLAN MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2019
GROUP 2

Question #1- Where do you live or work in this area? Not the address, but the neighborhood, street name or business. Everyone in the group responds with a quick answer.

- Right by Haven for Hope (live and work), since elementary school
- 400 block N Frio, 5 years
- 400 block N Frio, 19 years
- Soap Factory, works at SA Youth, 1 year
- Right by Haven for Hope, lifelong 55 years
- Smith and Commerce, 3rd generation (1941)
- Richter, lifelong
- Commerce and Zarzamora, lifelong
- Guadalupe and S. Colorado (work), since 2002
- Monclova and Trinity, 68 years, family since 1929
- Commerce and Zarzamora, 60+ years
- Leal and San Jacinto (Farias Park), 35 years
- VIA Centro Plaza (work), approximately 8 years

Question #2 – What benefits do you think Haven for Hope brings to the community? How has Haven for Hope helped the community?

- Helps many people, but draws both good and bad people
- Helps a lot of people, but the local community suffers
- Improvement over SAMS Ministries
 - But – there is still too much demand/need for Haven for Hope/homeless services
- People have to want help
- People are getting duplicative services (Haven for Hope, Salvation Army, etc.)
- Other large organizations are also looking for land – gentrification and how will development and change affect Haven for Hope?
- We want to see data that shows whether the Haven for Hope model is more/less successful than other models (dispersed services)

Question #3 – What health, safety and wellbeing impacts do you experience in your neighborhood?

- Need to research:
 - Why was haven for Hope located in this Community?
 - Was a Community Impact Study ever done after Haven for Hope was established?
- The Jail (and the whole ecosystem around it) also needs to be considered in this conversation
- Community was not involved in original decision. When a meeting was finally held to ask our opinion, the decision was already made.
 - Some of the original criteria could have indicated a number of other suitable locations (large parking area, good lighting, etc.)
 - Wasn't Haven for Hope only supposed to receive City funding for 10 years? What happened to self-sufficiency?



- Rezoning related to establishment of Haven for Hope?
- Lewd behavior
- Intimidating behavior
- Break-ins and assaults
- Especially concerned for elderly residents
- High volume of police calls related to Haven for Hope
- Impacts on VIA
 - Requires a lot of extra work from VIA Police force
 - Scobee Building – more difficult to redevelop/finance
 - Centro Plaza is the only place in the city where human bodies are allowed to block sidewalks
- Sleeping bags and paraphernalia (and general trash and litter) left on our property after weekends
- Panhandling and harassment
- Our park (Farias) is an attractor – there is a lot of bad behavior, even when kids are there playing
 - Park hours are not enforced
 - Better lighting would help
- Why can't we get an enhanced police presence and more speedy responses?

Question #4 – How do you think those impacts could be addressed?

- Why can't we use a more dispersed model? – build more facilities in other parts of town
- Move haven for Hope to the outskirts of town
- Ask Haven for Hope leadership to live in this area
- Habitat for Humanity could build homes such that police officers could live in the area
- City Council and elected officials should not allow concentration of agencies/organizations to inundate one area
- Address vacant lots and buildings
 - Hold property owners responsible for abandoned properties
- Need to address the Pik Nik store – what is going on? A lot of bad things...
- Also need to address the creekways – like parks, they are attractors of bad behavior

Question #5 – What other organizations or agencies could assist in addressing these concerns?

- Why are you asking us what agencies could help?

Question #6: How can the City and other entities be accountable to the community to address the concerns we heard?

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Indicate the three most important concerns for them and their three preferences for addressing them. Emphasize that all of their comments will be considered, but we want to know what are the most important for them.

Three most important neighborhood concerns:

1. Safety
2. Haven for Hope as an attractor / concentration of services



3. Property values are hurt by having Haven for Hope in the area
4. There is a lack of political will to help the Westside

Ways to mitigate the concerns:

1. Better prevention of homelessness to avoid increasing need
2. A more dispersed model of homeless and other social services
3. More transparent City communication and engagement



WESTSIDE COMMUNITY AREA PLAN MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2019
GROUP 3

Question #1- Where do you live or work in this area? Not the address, but the neighborhood, street name or business. Everyone in the group responds with a quick answer.

- Arbor Place (Frio-Colorado), 7 years
- Arbor Place (Frio-Colorado), 16 years
- Leal Street, 34 years
- Leal Street, 34 years
- Arbor Place, 52 years
- Arbor Place, 88 years
- Amestoy, 79 years
- Santa Anita, 12 years
- Arbor Place, 53 years
- Arbor Place, 37 years
- Ruiz and Haven, 34 years
- Leal Street, 29 years
- Travis and Salinas, 55 years
- Menchaca (Colorado and Zarzamora)
- Ruiz Street, 50 years
- Ruiz Street, 60 years
- Ruiz Street, 75 years
- San Martin Street

Question #2 – What benefits do you think Haven for Hope brings to the community? How has Haven for Hope helped the community?

- None / Zero
- If the people weren't there, where would they be?
- Safety/Police presence around Haven
- Family Services
- Family renting house: rent paid for by Haven. % rent assistance. Good neighbor with children
- Job placement

Question #3 – What health, safety and wellbeing impacts do you experience in your neighborhood?

- Drug use in parks
- Drug dealing
- Sleeping on sidewalk
- Public defecation and urination
- Sex, drugs
- Trash and waste
- Churches fencing off church
- Public urination at business on Zarzamora and Travis



- Sex offenders being housed at Haven
- Vandalism and trespassing
- Destruction of property
- Lack of communication from the city re: code violations (311 system) – 6 months...
- Pik Nik selling alcohol too close to Haven for Hope
- Panhandling at red lights
- Pik Nik at Ruiz and Colorado
- Fires and camps, Colorado and Culebra
- Community had no input or choice in the decision for Haven
- City is unresponsive to the issues
- Dilapidated buildings
- Localized 78207 problem

Question #4 – How do you think those impacts could be addressed?

- Include residents in decision making
- Dispersed services instead of concentrated center for homeless service
- Tax deduction for 78207 residents
- Better communication between City, Fire, and residents & *response*
- Increased police presence
- Better code enforcement
- Address/identify causes of homelessness
- Track the positive outcomes of Haven for Hope

Question #5 – What other organizations or agencies could assist in addressing these concerns?

- St. Vincent de Paul / churches
- SA Regional Alliance for Homeless

Question #6: How can the City and other entities be accountable to the community to address the concerns we heard?

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Indicate the three most important concerns for them and their three preferences for addressing them. Emphasize that all of their comments will be considered, but we want to know what are the most important for them.

Three most important neighborhood concerns:

1. Safety / crime / drug use and drug dealing
2. Waste and trash
3. Lack of City response

Ways to mitigate the concerns:

1. Track positive outcomes



2. Code enforcement and Police presence
3. Better communication from City – Better response & action
4. Community organizing
5. Close Pik Nik and other businesses that serve alcohol



WESTSIDE COMMUNITY AREA PLAN MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2019
GROUP 4 (SPANISH SPEAKING PARTICIPANTS)

Question #1- Where do you live or work in this area? Not the address, but the neighborhood, street name or business. Everyone in the group responds with a quick answer.

- Sabinas St. 1 week resident and community volunteer
- Zarzamora St. resident since the 1940's, community volunteer
- Leal St. resident since 1967, retired and community volunteer
- Ruiz St. resident for 30 years, retired
- Ruiz St. resident for 31 years, community volunteer
- Alvarez Pl.- resident for 20 years, community volunteer
- Representative of Church providing aid to Illegal Immigrants in the community
- San Jacinto St. resident since 1987
- Arbol Pl. resident for 33 years, retired
- Ruiz St. resident since 1996, works Downtown
- Ruiz St. resident for 25 years
- Delgado St. resident for 45 years

Question #2 – What benefits do you think Haven for Hope brings to the community? How has Haven for Hope helped the community?

- The organization provides benefits but NOT to this community
- They give donations to those in need

Question #3 – What health, safety and wellbeing impacts do you experience in your neighborhood?

- Lack of control, rules and respect (homeless navigate the streets at all hours of the day)
- Fear due to vacant lots and vacant buildings.
- Feel unsafe at any time of the day
- Homeless sleep on private property
- Syringes and unsanitary objects found on streets
- Witness obscene acts on street (sex)
- Dirt (also coming from neighbors)
- Illegal activity (drugs)
- Pik Nik affects the area as it sells alcohol
- Police is indifferent to community complaints
- Problem has increased, just as their taxes
- The City has neglected this area
- Kids and elderly are most vulnerable

Question #4 – How do you think those impacts could be addressed?

- Clean the streets
- More leaders



- Stop unjustified citations to residents
- More security, police presence to guard those on the streets
- Provide help and technical training so the homeless can get to work
- Provide community work opportunities for the homeless

Question #5 – What other organizations or agencies could assist in addressing these concerns?

- Church
- City of San Antonio
- Police Department
- Community

Question #6: How can the City and other entities be accountable to the community to address the concerns we heard?

- Change the location of the organization (Heaven for Hope)

Indicate the three most important concerns for them and their three preferences for addressing them. Emphasize that all of their comments will be considered, but we want to know what are the most important for them.

Three most important neighborhood concerns:

1. Unsafe
2. Dirty
3. Negligence to this community (focus is on the homeless, not the residents)

Ways to mitigate the concerns:

1. Unsafe- Heaven for Hope to have more control over its residents, improve street lighting
2. Dirty- provide more trashcans and attend noise pollution (train)
3. Negligence to this community (focus is on the homeless, not the residents) - encourage more community members to be leaders and Council members of this District to be more involved in their needs.



Westside Community Area Plan	
Meeting on Impacts from Haven for Hope and Homelessness on Nearby Neighborhoods August 27, 2019 St. Agnes Catholic Church Parish Hall, 825 Ruiz Street, 78207	
Summary of Comment Cards	
Comment	Zip Code
What do you think is the biggest concern regarding health, safety, and wellbeing impacts to the community?	
Safety - code compliance needs to enforce cars on lawns on Ruiz by garages. Pik Nik On Ruiz and Colorado needs fo be ?? [closed?]. And speed limits need to be enforced.	78207
We need more funding to build another Haven for Hope. More funding in neighborhood around Haven.	78207
There are absolutley no solutions for the homeless populations and the problem is getting worse. This meeting is a waste of time. Nothing was accomplished.	78228
It's the homeless doing drugs, selling drugs – prostituting around the area. Homeless breaking homes and businesses. Have more police patrolling - moving them out.	78207
Stealing/Breaking into property and more!	78210
Too many issues to list.	78207
Not enough interest from the City for this area.	78207
Balancing kindness towards those suffering from homelessness w/concerns about vagrancy and crime in the surrounding neighborhood.	78207
To have different HfH branches throughout the city.	78207
The hostility of some homeless who infiltrate our neighborhoods.	78207
Allowing homeless citizens to get away with continuing bad behavior despite community outcry.	78207
Comment	Zip Code
If you have any additional comments you would like to have included in the documentation for this meeting, please add them below.	
We need to pull funds from police to put into this neighborhood. Haven has outgrown the population	78207
Where is the Councilwoman Gonzales from District 5? The translation from English to Spanish too time consuming. We live in a English Speaking country. Meeting very poorly organized. Waste of time. Where are our public officials?	78228
If police see people just hanging around - kicking back - drinking and doing drugs - they should tell them to keep walking, move away from area.	78207
Take more time to answer our questions! Also to be prepare to translate in Spanish before meeting starts! Wasted lots of time!	78210
How disappointed I am on how the City is working on behalf of zip 78207.	78207
We need more social services not just in the Westside, but all across the city to PREVENT homelessness.	78207
Catalina the spanish interpreter did an excellent job translating.	78207
SA Tomorrow has imposed some very negative decisions on our communities - specifically in our oldest neighborhoods.	78207
Please use microphone if your voice can't project - couldn't hear except Ryerson/translator. Research origin of Patty Radle advocacy for this campus.	78207
On the last meeting we attended Chief McManus mention that this quality of life effects everyone living in this area. We drive almost every day on Ruiz, Colorado, and Zarzamora streets and we see people drinking in public, urinating in public, sleeping on the streets. I bring my family from out of town and I have to take a different direction to avoid seeing all these negative situations.	
The homeless visit our park [Farias Park] and take a bath at water fountain. They hang out at the picnic tables, not to mention the drugs. Park Police have been coming by 1-2 Xs a day.	

