

Jackson Ward Community Plan
RESIDENT LISTENING WORKSHOPS
Tuesday, May 10, 2022, and Tuesday June 14, 2022
Fay Towers - 1202 N 1st St

VISION for Jackson Ward

Notes from the 'People' boards

- want to ensure there is an entrepreneurial track of support
- homeowner track of support
- wants focus on programming for women engaged in substance abuse - more of a buddy system, village feel
- daycare business - again more village feel

Notes from the 'Neighborhood' board: *What could be improved in Jackson Ward?*

Community Garden:

- garden signage and a map (with history)
- stage to perform for the kids
- the history of JW + Gilpin Court - historic marker, trail, or public art
- storage for tools
- cooking demonstrations
- water at the community garden
- compost and recycling facilities
- seating area with shade
- wood chips for the trees

Calhoun Center:

- repair pool
- repair AC
- water feature, shade structures
- safety; no people fighting

Park:

- dog park
- a safe playground
- statue of children and adults
- splash pad
- pavilion
- need to maintain Shockoe Hill Cemetery

Other:

- electrical boxes are too close to ground
- Gilpin needs a senior section with everything on one floor like bungalows
- sense of pride!
- grocery store in Gilpin -- center of the neighborhood
- corner of Hill and St. Peter is very narrow

- squatters live in abandoned properties
- a lot of trash on Baker St. and N 2nd St.

Notes from the 'Housing' board: *What is it like living at Gilpin?*

- "I would like to stay in Gilpin"
- reinforce 11PM curfew
- areas that are "safe": Calhoun Center, between St James & 2nd and E Federal & E Baker
- areas that are "unsafe": between St. Paul & St James and W Hill & W Federal
- "boring" "nothing to do"

Notes from the 'Engagement' board: What type of engagement activities would you and your family get excited about participating in?

- find ways to get more residents to come!
- glasses & different ways to view presentation
- more after school activities for youth - curfew? - technology and training
- life skills & training. Bring resources
- cooking classes
- give out soap & body wash
- learn basic communications - bring into engagement
- bring nonprofits already in the community
- get councilmembers and people who they trust to be involved
- show something to get attention - more action!
- more cultural approaches - cultural lingo - studies on how to approach 18-35 or senior citizens
- new tech things like Instagram, etc.
- field day - fun get togethers
- have more vivid flyers with imagery and easier words - get to the point!
- "This is for you!"
- younger people out knocking on doors
- get more women out, including mothers
- mix important information with festivals
- free ice cream!

RESIDENT LISTENING SESSIONS

Resident Group X

There were 2 adult residents and 2 youth in the group. There was one former resident in the group who provided responses to the questions. Generally, the group was somewhat overwhelmed by discussion. Each had questions about the logistics of the demolition, and relocation dominated the conversation. Responding to these secondary questions was difficult and not as important to residents. Tremendous issues of trust also dominated the discussion and statements were made about how the proposed "community design" is not aligned with the needs of the community. Residents found it somewhat insulting that \$200,000 has been allocated for 1 of 6 projects when there are other critical housing unit needs that remain unaddressed. They were quite vocal about this and felt passionate that this was an example of misaligned community improvement priorities.

Neighborhood

- Safety - need more of it
- feel most safe in their homes, general front yard area, porch/stoop
- feel safe while in the community garden, describing space as peaceful and meditative
- Proximity - enjoy it
- love the proximity of their homes to greater Richmond community
- the neighborhood is convenient, affordable, and close to many things
- Beautification - enjoy it
- love Jackson Ward because of its historic roots
- feel empowered to live in a community that is predominately African American
- Change is needed
- modernization of homes/apartments
- improved air flow
- circulation (fresh air)
- upgrade in the quality of materials (remove cinderblock walls that remind them of a prison/jail)
- concrete floors are hard and injure children when they fall

Housing

- Ideal home would have a little more space
- one resident stated that her ideal home would have more than one floor
- ideal home would be safe

Vision

- Would like a community that is upgraded and modernized but aligned with needs of residents
- no risk of being moved out of community that we love.

Resident Group 1

- 4 current Gilpin Court residents

What do you love about living in Jackson Ward?

- One resident said: "Nothing." - she's having huge issues with safety, cleanliness, and livability
- "[has] no real favorite place in Gilpin." - youth female
- The Calhoun Center was a favorite place for a few people, but it is no longer truly accessible since it is under renovation
- Want a pool, somewhere to cool off
- Want more gathering spaces, BBQ, pool etc.
- "Recognizes the imperfection" in this community and its residents and feels there are ways to change
- Went from wanting her children to experience the world so that they could learn openly about it to feeling as if she had to somewhat guard them from sex and drug paraphernalia easily found in the alleys

What are 2 suggestions you have for the neighborhood?

- **Safety**
 - more effort towards keeping people safe
 - cut-off or minimize access to alleys to prevent drive-by shooting
 - one resident acknowledges many positive people in the community but feels that they must be multiplied.
 - improve resident friendly lighting in streets- does not prevent residents from sleeping
- **Sanitation**
 - Waste removal services
 - better public sanitation
 - Dog waste stations with bags for people to clean up after their dogs
 - Recycling receptacles for the community
 - accessibility - improve overall throughout community
- **Accessibility**
 - Playground ramps
 - playgrounds placed in different places, so they are walkable for everyone
- **Community Hubs**
 - the garden is not a fully accessible space because people do not know that it is there for them – no sense of ownership
 - enjoys hanging out the most on other people's stoops because that is the only place, she feels is available
 - Calhoun Center - different rooms for meditation, gathering, etc.

Education

- Need educational programs for children that include transportation throughout the area
- more affordable daycare services
- trend toward rebellious activity in part because that is the only option available; wants there to be a choice for educational opportunities
- grant program for children who cannot afford to go to college
- library within the Calhoun center.
- "Etiquette program" within a community hub's services
- "New generation [of residents] mirrors the elder generation...[believes] generational trauma creates a deficit that needs filling in other programs"

Facilities

- Must travel outside of Jackson Ward to reach a hospital and other services.

Housing

- wants option for her to own the house she lives in now within the next 5 years (including the apt on the back of her house)
- Frustrated that she is not allowed to have personally implemented home security (as stated in her lease agreement)
- Enjoys the character of a cottage or single-family, one-level home
- wishes for any home with better conditions than where she currently resides.
- Enjoys the appeal of the duplex

Vision

- *Key Concepts: accessibility, safety, lighting, and a community hub with educational programs and recreational opportunities.*
 - mixed community with few barriers
 - accessible, safe, clean, drug free Gilpin

- needle exchange programs

Resident Group Y

- 2 live in Gilpin (and do not want to stay)
- 2 live in Gilpin and would return
- 1 Former resident

Favorite place in Jackson Ward

- **Calhoun center**
 - Calhoun center has several programs, programs are not lengthy during the day, and undersupplied and funded Programs come and go quickly and have no permanence
- **Need:** Support community programs that engage children but especially teens
- **Need:** dog spot

Where do you feel safe?

- In their house, nowhere else (one person said the park beside black history museum)
- People open carrying weapons concern residents

What do you love about the beautification of JW

- in previous decades there were flowers when the public areas were maintained well, maintained grass, litter pickup (lack of maintenance today), recreational aids that watched over the kids to help protect and keep out trouble
- Removing police from area was detrimental for some, others don't trust or have any hope in police

What needs to be changed

- All of it – referring to the neighborhood

Resident's state they do not spend time with neighbors anywhere out in public

- Youth engagement outside school needs to be provided
- Calhoun center has several programs, programs are not lengthy during the day, and undersupplied and funded
- Programs come and go quickly and have no permanence
- With one main feature like a water pad, it should be spread out because with only one there it is not enough space and it is overcrowded
- Update buildings, too old
- Buildings must have maintenance no matter how many nice elements are added – tied to impermanence of programs
- Trails must be safe before people will use them

Residents feel like any actions taken are not permanent and named several previous programs and elements they enjoyed but quickly failed or went away

People

- **Child Care and Kids Spaces**
 - **Need:** Early child education – nursery, daycare, homework groups, buddy plan program,
 - Current programs, residents must have job before admitted for childcare – but childcare is needed for a job

- Current Playground is unsafe due to gun violence, etc
- Parents take children to downtown Y or the store (errands) – mostly outside of neighborhood for refuge
- “Peoples Place” kept children as an extension of baker elementary with supplemental education but was defunded
- TJ High school – one participant’s child likes the school and wishes to stay – wishes to get ROTC program at school
- Currently, school-age children stay in house because feel unsafe
- Cost of any program is a major barrier
- Tutors needed, and programs that spend time with children – children with special needs services are needed
- Many people have autistic children – programs needed
- Participants mentioned previous programs that show children other countries and cultures – it is difficult for residents to get access to museums and arts and travel, so these programs are valuable
- **Need:** Boys and girls club, girl scouts boy scouts, nature programs, free lunch carts used to go around and provide lunch to children
- Mention previous program “Hoop-it-up” (three on three basketball tournament
- **Need:** Sports programs
- **Jobs and Businesses**
 - Black-owned businesses – corner stores, etc are signs of a functional community
 - **Need:** Jobs training and skills development – technical skills – special consideration for children with disability
 - Special needs training regarding jobs – jobs training and jobs placement for special needs adults, even minor special needs categories such as previously had a stroke
- **Elder Care and Medical Needs**
 - **Need:** Programs for older people – disabled as well
 - **Need:** Medical services at community center

Housing

- **Need:** More bathrooms; bigger kitchen; some want carpet, some want no carpet
- larger rooms - living rooms, closets, wall space; newer kitchen equipment
- **Need:** Single units for older populations and must be handicapped accessible
- Townhouse – liked by some
- Multifamily - liked by one or two
- Areas with elderly, kids, single people – kids and younger populations cause crime when not engaged in activities
- Residents currently have trouble getting maintenance to units
- When kids use firecrackers, parents should be fined. They are a major nuisance and contribute to unsafe feeling
- **Need:** Backdoors / more than one-way into the home
- Recreation/play is very important on checklist that was provided by the moderator – no one selected trails or multifamily senior housing; Indoor fitness was selected over outdoor fitness
- A successful community has “flow”, multiple hotspots and multiple activities, vibrancy
- Need transit access – difficult to walk any distances and it is far for ADA residents

- Discussed home ownership and there were mixed reactions to condos; concerned ownership properties would be too expensive

Resident Group Z

Conditions in Gilpin

- **Cleanliness**
 - Residents share photos of rats burrowing along sidewalks in Gilpin
 - rats in apartments
 - mold, mildew
- **Safety**
 - In and around units are unsafe, particularly for children
 - Rusted tubs and appliances, flooding, water leaking into the kitchen from cracks in the walls
 - Mold affecting residents' ability to breathe; don't feel safe outside
 - Broken glass and windows
 - Drug dealing - residents don't know who to turn to when this is happening
 - Frequent shootings on St. Paul
- **Planning Process**
 - The overall effort feels empty when people are dealing with the above issues/conditions
 - Focus on residents rather than (for example) improving a playground
 - Hard to think about the future when these problems are so immediate
 - Money should go directly to the people
 - Interested in programs, such as grant programs, that will help residents build livelihoods and improve their own situations
 - "Improve the people to improve the neighborhood"
 - Entrepreneurship
- **Physical improvements**
 - Vision: Improving and beautifying buildings
 - Affordability
 - Homeownership
 - A water feature
 - Trail or trail network
 - Indoor event space with air conditioning
 - Ball fields, fitness areas
 - Community kitchen
 - Mobile library
 - Outdoor BBQ area
 - Make everything for kids nice and safe, colorful
 - support services and support with homeschooling