

Most Relevant Findings

Consolidated Findings 6/5/2013

NID Focus Groups

Introduction

In order to design and implement the Sherman Park Neighborhood Improvement District (NID) the Program Development Committee determined the need to gather community feedback on the proposal. This Committee consisted of a working group of over 60 residents who met in a series of bi-weekly meetings over a ten month period to identify needs, clarify assets and determine methods to reach out to the community.

In support of this effort the Sherman Park Community Association has during this time acted as lead agency and conducted town hall meetings with over 400 residents. The Committee and SPCA also decided that the most appropriate way of expanding this research would be the application of guided focus group discussion.

Method Utilized

Focus groups are generally used by researchers to determine participant perceptions on a given subject through the use of statements and/or questions designed to generate comments. The resulting comments are recorded, displayed and voted upon. The voting provides participants with the opportunity to voice their preferences and helps guide data analysis.

Four meetings were held in the Kleiger Auditorium of Wheaton Franciscan St. Joseph's Hospital during the following times:

- Thursday, May 16, 6pm
- Saturday, May 18, 9am
- Saturday, May 18, 1pm
- Tuesday, May 21, 6pm

Discussion Points

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the following subjects:

Question One (Eligibility and Grant Matching)

- Owner-occupants within the NID are eligible to apply for home repair funds.
- Funds will be available as matching grants on a sliding-scale based on income.
- Owner-occupants within the lowest income bracket will not be required to make a matching contribution.

Question Two (NID Assessment)

- All residential property owners within the NID boundaries will be assessed \$50 annually.
- The NID assessment will only increase with the approval of 75% of the property owners voting at annual NID meeting.

Question Three (Grant Funds and Projects)

- The NID will provide approximately \$112,500 in grant funding annually.
- 66% of the grant money will be directed towards home repairs.
- 9% of the grant money will be directed towards community improvement projects.

Question Four (Grant Limits)

- Owner-occupants are eligible to apply for up to \$5,000 in grant funds for home repairs.
- Owner-occupants are eligible for no more than \$5,000 in grant funds over a 5-year period.

Findings

Data generated by the four Focus Groups were extensive and varied. Ten pages (2300 words) of comments were generated. These comments were gathered by SPCA (directed by Dr. Tom Lifvendahl) and analyzed by a team of three people (including Lifvendahl). A series of sorting processes were used to winnow down data commentary. All comments listed in this document are exactly as recorded during the focus group sessions by assigned facilitators. No changes have been made to them.

Coding Level One (Initial Sort)

Using the following Statements determine relevancy of focus group comments:

1. Wheat from Chaff...comments that are deemed of low relevance to the NID and reflect personal biases and unsubstantiated beliefs
2. Direct Positive Impact on the NID...comments that provide useful insights into NID design and proposal composition
3. Suggestions for Process Improvement...comments that enhance NID implementation and deployment
4. Useful Observation and Opinions...comments that provide insights into participant beliefs and preconceptions

Coding Level Two (Second Sort)

The team used Dr. Lifvendahl's initial coding of relevant findings to rate their independently done work. This was accomplished through an either/or, yes/no process of filtration. In order to include or exclude a given statement all three coders were required to be in agreement.

Coding Level Three (Third Sort)

A final filtering was applied wherein the three coders had to agree or disagree as to comment feasibility for implementation in the proposal design process. Listed below are the results of

this process. Included are focus group voting results. Votes in agreement with the comment are represented by the letter **G**, votes in disagreement are represented by the letter **R**.

Question One

Who Should Be Considered

Funds should go to owner occupied. 7G 4R

Owner occupants given priority. 12G 1R

Homeowner's priority. 4G

Long-term homeowner's priority. 8G

All income eligible. 1G 1R

Grants for everyone regardless of income. 9G 3R

Okay with lowest income not having to contribute. 8R

Everyone should be eligible for grant regardless of income – no sliding scale necessary. 11G 2R

Everyone who pays in should be able to access NID funds. 9R

Agree with sliding scale. 5G 3R

Sliding scale is good for senior citizens. 2G

Sliding Scale based on income and need. 5G

Favor sliding scale as is. 8R

I own a duplex but don't rent it out. I don't want to pay twice. I should only pay once. 5G 2R

Low income grant. 5G

Grant for low income. 6G

Low Income Needs

Low income can't afford match. 1G

Contributed \$50 – poorest should have access. 3G

Grant makes sense for low income. 3G 1R

Grants for elders (70+) should be helped by having lower amount [matching funds] 0% OK. 10G 1R

Fund distributions should be based on need not income. 12G 1R

Should grants also be based on physical handicapped? 11G

Home owners who have been in their home for a long time (20-30 years) should have special consideration. 7G

Prioritize by condition of property, worst first. 3G

Eligible if you live above your business. 5G

Resident of NID with separate property in NID (ie. Investor owner) should be eligible for NID funds. 2G

People living only on one floor of duplex (not renting) pay one \$50 fee. 4G

Need accountability. Money doesn't go to homeowners. Use licensed contractors. 2G

Question Two

Just Amount of Tax

\$50 sounds okay. 5G

\$50 is minimum. No problem

\$50 is reasonable. 5G

\$50 is a good price. 7G 1R

\$50 charge per year fine by me. 6G

Everyone in SP should be assessed equally (\$50). 5G

\$50 flat fee. 3R

\$50 per home not unit. 8G 3R

Assessment should be \$50 per building, not unit. 5G

Disagreed with \$50 per unit charge. Owner occupied duplex without tenant should pay \$50 dollars. 4G

50 + only for benefitted people. 10R

Owner occupied with tenant pays \$100. 3G

Commercial with residential units is assessed with both /all units. 1G

Does \$50 meet goal of what we want raise? 1G 1R

Difficult for residents to come up with fee, but is good for neighborhood. 5G

We need to raise more money for the program. Not enough. 10G

Assessment Revision Processes

Needs of the program will go up over time. So with oversight, assessment can go up too. 2G

Fair to have assessment go up with 75% property owners voting at Annual Meeting

75% is a good number

Need 75% from residents in order to change assessment. 2G

NID assessment [increase] must be based on 75% residents [property owners] in the community not only meeting attendants. 7G

Absentee voting for increase at Annual Meeting. 3G

Just Allocation of Funds

Should dispersal be according to need or first come/first served (for example roof caving in).

2G 1R

Question Three

Grant Allocation

All houses that are owner occupied should be eligible for grants. 4G

Income dependent for grants. 1G

Prefer individual consideration for each grant. 6G 3R

Housing should take priority over community improvement. 11G

All available funds should go to homeowners – no community improvement. 2R

Good break down of 66% home repair, 9% CIP. 6G

9% for comm. imp projects is appropriate.

OK with community projects.

\$37,500 for admin and paper work is too much. 6G 2R

\$112,500 in grants is not a lot of money and can't help lots of people. 4G

This is a waste of time because \$112,500 can't do much for the neighborhood. 1G 5R

\$112,000 is not enough. 7G 1R

Quality Control

Need to use licensed and qualified contractors. 11G

How to find reputable contractors – create Angie's list. 1G

Framework of guidelines for cost of repair – multiple bids. 2G

Emergency repair fund.

Possible priorities:

Duration of residency. 1G 1R

Code violations. 2G

Seniors and handicapped.

Question Four

Time Frames

5 year time limit on grant just.

Five year too long. 3G 1R

5 years is too long.

Three years eligible, not as long as five. 2G 1R

Time limit flexible, 2-3 years. 4G

The five year limit must be flexible. 7G

There has to be limits or else the same people will get the money. 7G

Just Allocation

Disagree with "owner occupants s are eligible for no more than 5K for grant funds" over annually instead of a 5 year period. 3G 1R

Owners with more than one property should be eligible based on property number: 2 prop = 2 chances for a grant, 5yrs per each property. 2G 1R

\$5K is not a lot of money. 6G 2R

\$5,000 is low. 5G

Higher grant amount for extreme conditions. 2G 2R

\$5K is a good start. 3G 3R

Raise the number to \$7,000. 6G 9R

Should be \$10K per unit. 4R

Thinks amount may need to increase. 9G

Larger \$ amount means less people can participate.

Pair up with other program - \$5,000 is probably fine. 3G

Pair up with other program. 3G

Some funds for clean-up, vacant lot maintenance with goal of hiring people from neighborhood. 7G 1R Yes

City inspector should check out the work to make sure it is done correctly. 12G

Will someone assess [evaluate] the residents requesting funds? 5G