



Enterprising Places Steering Committee
Monday, November 3, 2014
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Metro Regional Center, Room 270

Committee Members Present

Janet Young, Chair
Jonath Colon
Kathryn Harrington
Sloan Schang
Don Stastny
Tonisha Toler
Jeana Woolley

Janet Young Consulting
Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
Metro
Energy Trust of Oregon
Stastny: architect llc
Regional Arts & Culture Council
J.M. Woolley & Associates

Metro Staff and Guests

Camille Freestone
Elissa Gertler
Megan Gibb
Deb Meihoff
Joel Morton
Ramona Perrault
Brian Emerick

Metro
Metro
Metro
Communitas Planning
Metro
Metro
Emerick Architecture

I. REVIEW OF AGENDA

The meeting was convened at 3:07 p.m. by Ms. Elissa Gertler, Director of Planning and Development at Metro. She outlined the agenda for the meeting and gave an overview of the items for discussion.

II. COMMITTEE QUESTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING OVERALL PROGRAM MISSION AND STRUCTURE

Councilor Kathryn Harrington inquired about how the program will define transformation. She asked that examples of places that characterize district transformation be cited during the presentation to the Metro Council. She noted the need to present the program in a positive way to elected officials around the region. Mr. Don Stastny noted that due to scale differences, one street's or district's success can look very different than another's. Councilor Harrington granted that there is no one size fits all solution, but noted the need for clearer expectations to meet the stakeholders' needs.

The committee discussed whether the onus of defining transformation would be upon the program or the grant applicant. Ms. Megan Gibb explained that staff was considering an FAQ page for the application process that would lay out what a District Transformation grant covers and looks like. Ms. Lisa Miles also noted that the grant application suggests that applicants visit the website to see best practices and success stories; it will provide information but will not be prescriptive.

Councilor Harrington expressed concern that the assessment document contains no general description of success. Ms. Gertler noted that the program also wants to reward human and place based transformation.

Committee members discussed how to question applicants about transformation, and how those answers will be evaluated. Mr. Jonath Colon noted that if the question will be scored, then a baseline for transformation must be established.

III. RECAP OF AREAS RECOMMENDED FOR PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Ms. Deb Meihoff called for questions about the eligible areas and noted that she had photos available of each area.

Ms. Janet Young inquired about the decision making process for the two areas eligible for district transformation grants but not Storefront Improvement grants that are located outside of Portland. One is in Rockwood, and the other is in Cornelius. She noted that neither has exceptional potential, but they appear to score as well as other areas, and there is opportunity for improvement. She explained that Cornelius had recently made some investments, and it would take very little to cause transformation. Ms. Young also noted that Rockwood has some urban renewal funds, but they have not been targeted toward storefront improvement. She proposed that Cornelius be included in the Storefront Improvement grant eligible areas, if not Rockwood.

Councilor Harrington expressed concern that the explanations associated with each area did not match the determination of eligibility, which made the reasoning behind the eligibility of Cornelius and Rockwood confusing. She asked that more information be provided on the eligible areas, suggesting that a note box be provided with an explanation of the staff recommendation.

Ms. Meihoff explained that Cornelius and Rockwood both have some urban form challenges including one way highway streets and a lack of connectivity. Ms. Jeana Woolley informed the committee that she would be opposed to adding Rockwood to the areas eligible for Storefront Improvement grants because it receives urban renewal funds, which could set a precedent for exceptions to the policy that made all urban renewal areas ineligible for Storefront Improvement grants. Ms. Miles noted that some suburban areas that receive urban renewal have been included in the areas eligible for the Storefront Improvement grants; only urban renewal areas in Portland have been excluded. Ms. Woolley expressed concern that the urban renewal funds in addition to urban form challenges made Rockwood an unviable candidate for Storefront Improvement grants; she conceded, however, that Cornelius has potential to be changed with just a few projects.

Ms. Gibb and Ms. Gertler explained that due to the parameters of the Storefront Improvement grant program the eligibility lines would need to be drawn extremely tightly in order to exclude strip malls which need a different set of tools

Councilor Harrington iterated that the problem she saw was not with the decision, but with the materials that explained the decision. She cited the write up of NW 42nd Ave as an example, which states that there are a number of specialty shops that serve the everyday needs of the community; she asked why, if the current storefronts are serving everyday needs, the area needs transformation. She suggested that each area have a clear explanation of the need for change.

Ms. Miles noted that businesses that are serving needs often still need improvements. Ms. Gertler suggested that staff explain further why enhancements are needed to provide clarity.

Ms. Woolley made a motion to approve eligible areas with the friendly amendment from Ms. Young regarding Cornelius. Mr. Stastny seconded the motion which was unanimously approved.

Mr. Stastny praised staff for their work on the program.

IV. BEST PRACTICES FOR STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Brian Emerick, Emerick Architects, introduced himself and explained his background. He outlined the basic concepts of a storefront, and explained that they should cater to a pedestrian, locally owned business environment. He then gave an overview of the design principles for a storefront:

Ms. Gibb noted that the pilot program had removed awnings in Hillsboro, per Ms. Michelle Reeves' advice, but he seemed to be suggesting that awnings be added. Mr. Emerick explained that awnings have to be very deliberate and correctly placed to be successful improvements.

Mr. Emerick then gave an overview of several case studies including: Irvington retail, Portland Internetworks, and Cha Cha Cha.

Ms. Young noted that the Irvington retail space was a large investment. She inquired about how that investment would compare with investments made by grant recipients. Mr. Emerick explained that this was a large investment, but the same principles can be applied on a smaller scale. Additionally he noted that sometimes a small amount of grant money motivates the grantee to invest more than their match.

Councilor Harrington pointed out to the committee that many local bars are less than inviting. She explained that in New England many local bars are nice and have good food. She asked if the program had ever done a storefront improvement with a local bar. Ms. Young noted that some programs cannot invest in places that don't cater to all ages. Mr. Emerick explained that local bars can activate night life, which is positive for business districts, but storefront improvements should also be pedestrian oriented, and many bars don't have open, windowed facades.

The committee discussed the quality of materials for projects. Mr. Stastny asked if maintenance needs are considered when materials are chosen. Mr. Emerick explained that maintenance needs are definitely considered, but no materials are maintenance free. Ms. Young inquired about whether the grant application should specify a preference for higher quality, low maintenance materials. Mr. Emerick emphasized that investing in professional design and contracting services prevents many potential issues. Ms. Woolley noted that the program may have a list of certain professionals that businesses owners can choose to work with. Ms. Tonisha Toler asked if maintenance costs are included in the allotted funds from grants. Mr. Emerick explained that some tenants and owners have agreements on who handles maintenance, but some do not, and that needs to be a conversation built into the process.

Mr. Stastny suggested that staff create a resource reservoir so business owners that are interested in the program can look at examples. Ms. Miles noted that staff planned to put together a resource to help grant recipients be more articulate about what they want architecturally.

Councilor Harrington suggested that the pre-application and application emphasize how the improvement will give back to the street and larger community. Brian noted that applicants need to be aware that they are part of a larger community.

V. STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT AND DISTRICT TRANSFORMATION GRANT PROGRAMS: PROPOSED APPLICATIONS/APPROVALS PROCESS AND GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Ms. Miles gave a high level overview of the grant application process for Storefront Improvement grants and District Transformation grants and outlined the two draft application packets.

Mr. Stastny asked for clarification of the wait list, which Ms. Miles provided. Mr. Colon noted that he was not behind the idea of a wait list, as he felt that asking people to wait on a project was not fair.

Councilor Harrington suggested that a conversation take place to discuss measuring the program's success. She explained that the parameters for success will affect the program audit. She also suggested that there be a final step where financial numbers are collected and "after" photos are taken.

Mr. Stastny asked if there was a performance audit step built into the process following the completion of a project. Ms. Miles informed the committee that there would be caveats written into the contract requiring that no alterations or additions be made to the building for five years and that the property be maintained, but she noted that these can be difficult to enforce. Ms. Woolley suggested that a reserve requirement be written in the contract so that the business owner must have money moving forward for maintenance.

Committee members discussed potential questions they would like to see added to the application forms. Committee members asked that they meet again to provide further input regarding the application forms and proposed process.

VI. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF PROGRAM LAUNCH AND OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Due to time constraints this agenda item was delayed to the next meeting.

VII. CONFIRM FUTURE MEETING DATES AND ANTICIPATED FEBRUARY MEETING AGENDA

It was decided that another meeting would be scheduled after Thanksgiving to discuss implementation and outreach for the program launch.

VIII. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Attachments to the Record:

Item	Topic	Document Date	Description	Document Number
1	Agenda	10/22/14	October 22 meeting agenda	102214epsc_01
2	Agenda	11/3/14	November 3 meeting agenda	102214epsc_02
3	Contact List	0	Steering Committee contact list	102214epsc_03
4	Work Plan	October 2014	Enterprising Places work plan	102214epsc_04
6	Eligible Districts	October 2014	Assessment of eligible districts	102214epsc_05
7	2040 map	September 2014	2040 Growth Concept Map	102214epsc_07

Meeting summary respectfully submitted by,

Camille Freestone

Administrative Specialist