

PHS Public Input Session

Participant Ideas

Monday, September 13th

- When a property maintenance violation is identified what resources are given to the property owner?
- The Planning department identifies property discrepancies in neighborhood plans that are separated out. The discrepancies are not on your report. It seems like you're not looking at the big picture.
- Are the largest amount of cases in poverty areas? What are the expectations? How are they being addressed? How are we helping owners to come into compliance?
- Hire people in the neighborhoods to cut grass (violations).
- Is there a breakdown of property owners versus landlords?
- Obtaining numbers – Who are the property owners in collections? How many local landlords versus out-of-town landlords? (Steve Vogel – SNCO Landlord Association has some data.)
- Interior inspections are important - Why isn't it enforced?
- It's challenging to have rental inspections done prior to a new move-in. This could possibly take 30-45 days for a landlord.
- Substandard properties - In reality, what is a good number to strive for? 3% seems to be a good number.
- What is the incentive for property owners/landlords to come back into the inner city to repair the dilapidated properties? Chicago, Kansas City, Memphis have good programs.
- Incentive programs for property owners needs to happen.
- It's not the 1970's – What are we doing now to keep property owners in Topeka?
- TOTO program – What is the price value? It needs to be lowered for people to buy blighted properties.
- Utilize the youth via Washburn Tech, local high schools (Lazone Grays has ideas to assist in the LMI neighborhoods. His contact information will be provided at a later date.).
- Gentrification – try to make sure it doesn't happen.
- In the 1970's, OIC designed a job training program- LMI youth were hired to take care of properties owned by elderly in neighborhoods.
- Old programs helped the community - Tool Lending Library & the \$1 home buying program.
- 1970's Hi-Crest – there were 30-40 trustworthy young men who could be contacted by the NIA to assist people with projects.

- In the 1970's, YCAT Industrial Center ensured the youth volunteered in the community. Currently, the youth are OSHA certified. Unsure when or if they'll be allowed to volunteer.
- 1970's Mr. Abbott had a clinic that assisted neighborhoods.
- Community gardens need to be set-up in neighborhoods.
- CERT program
- CARE program – tenants are giving up because landlords aren't fixing the properties.
- City of Detroit – 15 years ago there was a program where empty lots were turned into gardens (4-6 acres of community gardens). The city provided the seeds.
- Neighbors need to help neighbors.
- Is the city still allowing property owners to turn large homes into multi-housing units?
- Neighborhood Clean Ups – in the past, the Topeka Youth Project assisted the elderly and were involved and helped.
- Vacant Properties – all property owners need to be treated the same/don't separate. It will cause a bureaucratic mess.
- Key players need to be on the same page (judges, prosecutors, etc.) on how they enforce violators.
- People should sit in a Property Maintenance Hearing and hear all of the property owner's financial issues.
- Property owners need to utilize programs in the community to address their issues.
- Out-of-town registry for banks/property owners needs to be established to ensure their held accountable for the upkeep of properties. Penalties need to be enforced in a timely manner. It shouldn't take 1 1/2 years.
- Vacant properties - Death of property owners causes squatters/vandals/burning down of properties.
- Neighborhood watch – only 3 participants are aware/involved. Consistency is a challenge. Social media doesn't replace face-to-face connectivity.
- Rice Road- an increase in meth usage. Neighbors are scared and reach out to community leaders to call the Topeka Police Department.
- Overgrowth – A property owner received a violation letter. However, the City property across the street had grass the same height.
- USD 501 needs to start a program employing youth to cut grass in the neighborhoods.
Program framework
 1. Administrator/2. Identify youth/3. Identify projects/4. Distribute projects

- Washburn Tech East - There aren't a lot of local kids participating.
- Topeka Way to Work Program – the youth have lost trust in the City. The City needs to focus on building partnerships with schools, business, etc. to employ youth.
- Washburn Tech has a program for student's to start a business. The city needs to provide funds to hire students to start projects like mowing grass?
- Go back to programs that worked like the Enhancement that assisted NIAs and neighborhoods.
- The City of Topeka needs to build a better relationship with the youth.
- Neighborhoods can't depend on the City to do the work for them. The Division of Community Engagement established programs e.g., "Rock the Block" to help the neighborhoods. During the handoff the neighborhoods didn't continue the efforts. The neighborhoods have to be willing to do the work.
- Centralized searchable listing of bid lists for small businesses. Teach people how to bid on the projects.
- Open Air Ditches – Central Highland Park NIA was informed that open ditches could be included in their neighborhood plan. However, Property Maintenance is now enforcing the open air ditches. UPDATE - Major Klumpp is currently working on the language to approve native vegetation.
- Youth must be involved. We need to try to get them involved. Why can't USD 501 have more programs/vocational trainings, jobs?
- Memphis, TN – sold dilapidated homes for \$10,000 encouraging affordable home ownership. The TOTO program needs to lower the home value.
- It's hard for property owners to buy a home that has experienced blight for 10 years and then be expected to turn it around immediately.
- Youth – don't have the funds to pay for trade schools. We need to find the funds for their tuition.
- Afterschool programs need to be created to teach kids how to sharpen blades, etc.
- Trash – Do we have local hoarding specialists? Mental health agencies that can assist. The neighbors need to be identified and provided with help.
- Everyone needs to be held accountable for their property upkeep.
- Trash – Provide dumpsters at ½ price for move-outs.
- Clean-up's – Neighbors Helping Neighbors
- Dumpsters – set on fire after clean-up
- The City of Manhattan – after a storm ensures that debris & limbs are picked up. Would it be helpful if the City of Topeka created such a program? Would it change the culture of the community? Possibly.

- Tool Lending Library – people don't have the equipment. In lieu of the program what if big box stores provided a coupon/reduced rental rates.
- It's important to talk to your neighbors and get to know each other/reach out/dialogue.
- Neighborhood Contests – beautification projects – e.g., certain day a week once a month everyone does a clean-up
- Free dumping needs to happen more often. Neighbors with trucks need to assist.
- SENT's new construction in Hi-Crest has increased the property values. This strategy works.
- Inmate programs – the cost is exuberant. There is the potential of them escaping.
- Social Service System – people are calling and finding out they've run out of money. They need to be provided more funds quickly.
- Tenants need to be provided information about who has funding to help them quickly.
- How many people are willing to help change the culture of Topeka? 12 people raised their hand.
- Councilmembers Valdivia-Alcalá and Hiller noted that Mr. Lazone Grays with IBSA Inc. had a wealth of knowledge in this field. They suggested people contact him at lazoneg@ibsa-inc.org or call 913-735-4272.