

JOINT CITY-COUNTY OF LA CROSSE HOUSING TASK FORCE

October 18, 2011

Administrative Center Room 3220

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Rick Staff, Steve Nicolai, Jill Billings, Doug Farmer, Mathias Harter, Jay Hoeschler, Tara Johnson, Marvin Wanders, Tina Wehrs
MEMBERS EXCUSED:	Kathlee Enz Finken, Audrey Kader, Todd Mandel, Wayne Oliver, Michael Richards, Sara Sullivan
OTHERS PRESENT:	Steve O'Malley, Brian Fukuda, Karl Green, Larry Kirch, Jason Dillaber, Amy Peterson, Pat Killeen, Andrew Londre, Chief Gregg Cleveland, Joan Mueller, Pat Kerrigan, Vicki Burke, Terri Pavlic

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 P.M.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 20, 2011

MOTION by Nicolai/Johnson to approve minutes of the September 20, 2011 meeting of the Joint City-County of La Crosse Housing Task Force. **Motion carried unanimously.** (Enz Finken, Kader, Mandel, Oliver, Richards, Sullivan excused)

PRESENTATION BY FIRE CHIEF ON HOUSING RELATED ISSUES

Chief Gregg Cleveland gave a presentation on "*Poverty and the Fire Service*". La Crosse is one of the top five cities in Wisconsin that is below the poverty level according to the 2005-2009 US Census Bureau.

- **Education and income are important factors**
 - Lower education levels; lower paying jobs
 - Occupy homes of lesser assessed values
 - Cannot afford newer appliances/furnishings
 - space heaters without automatic shutoffs
 - older used furniture that does not meet federal flammability standards
 - essential home equipment is not repaired, i.e. furnaces, electrical wiring (develop "work arounds" instead of repairs)
- **Demographics**
 - Parents, especially single parents, tend to have multiple jobs
 - Work longer hours and suffer from fatigue
 - Falling asleep while food on stove or smoking in bed or chairs
 - Parents, especially single parents tend to perform more multi-tasking functions in the home (i.e. showering while food cooking on the stove)
- **La Crosse Fire Department Experience**
 - A study of structure fires in one and two family dwellings from 2008-2010 found
 - Of 77 reported fires in 1 and 2 family dwellings 62% occurred in homes with an average assessed value of \$120,000 or less

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- Of the 77 reported fires in 1 and 2 family dwellings 86% of fires occurred in dwellings valued at 150,000 or less
- Only 1 fire occurred in a home with an assessed value of \$250,000 or more

- **La Crosse Fire Deaths – 20 year review**
 - 17 out of 18 buildings were 1 or 2 family dwellings (the other was an apt. house)
 - The average assessed value of the 17 dwellings was \$105,594
 - The range of assessed values was from \$31,981 to \$110,187

- **What can be done**
 - The fire dept can be a resource and a partner to address community issues
 - The fire dept has a high degree of public trust
 - The fire dept personnel are generally looked upon as role models for youth
 - The power of influence

- **LCFD as a Partner and Resource**
 - Previous successes – Threat Liaison Program; missing children; fire prevention in public buildings
 - Problem identification data analysis – Link fire and EMS calls to property values; Identify key behaviors and events that result in serious inquiries or death
 - Education - smoke alarms, evacuation plans, E.D.I.T.H. ; neighborhood education programs re: safety
 - Role Models – reputation of fire fighters; education regarding careers in emergency services; fire safety behaviors
 - Public Education Programs for Children – Riskwatch
 - Fire Service Culture Change – “Guardianship”; fire service does not issue many citations – they have been taught to help people not punish them.

Summary

- There is a documented research linking the issues of income and education to the demand and use of emergency services
- What is needed is a long term systematic strategy to address this problem
- Programs aimed at raising the level of education and income in affected areas will reduce the demand for emergency services
- Fire department can play an important part in making long-term improvements in affected areas
- Requires investment in resources, education training and a cultural shift in the fire department
- Outside assistance – Riskwatch, NFPA, etc.

REPORT FROM MEETING WITH GUNDERSEN LUTHERAN, VITERBO UNIVERSITY AND MAYO HEALTH SYSTEM

Recently representatives from Mayo and Viterbo met with Rick Staff and Mike Richards (Gundersen Lutheran). Everyone is on the same page, but there are many opportunities and problems in the Powel/Hood/Hamilton/Washburn neighborhoods but also limited resources. Pat Kerrigan of Viterbo indicated that they are interested in neighborhood enhancements, i.e. designated safe walkways, improved lighting; enhanced security surveillance (cameras & patrols); increased inspections. They appreciated the chance to

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discuss these things with the committee and would like to be part of the discussions in the future. Joan Mueller, of Mayo Clinic Health System, indicated that they are also on board with improving these neighborhoods. She felt that tangible evidence is needed to show that things have changed.

DISCUSSION OF NORTHSIDE ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Larry discussed the La Crosse's North Side issues and opportunities. He reviewed the flood map and distributed a handout listing the issues and assets:

Issues: La Crosse's north side is faced with the same issues as neighborhoods on the south side compounded by floodplain designation:

- Aging housing stock
- Perceptions of crime/drug houses
- Unkempt properties
- Influence of non owner-occupied property
- Floundering neighborhood association
- Hodgepodge of zoning on major corridors
- Perceived lack of emphasis by City in paying attention to "North Side"
- Lack of shopping/retail/restaurants opportunities

Assets: La Crosse's north side has many of the same types of amenities as the south side

- Black River Beach Neighborhood Center
- Old Towne North-Caledonia Street Merchants, Northside Business Association
- Logan Pool
- Logan Middle and High School, Northwoods/Franklin/Roosevelt Schools, Waldorf School
- The Muse Theater
- Copeland Park – Baseball – Logger Stadium
- Some streetscaping along Rose Street/Caledonia Street
- North Side Library
- North Side Community Policing Center
- Harry J. Olson Senior Center
- Growing list of bike trails
- Redevelopment Opportunity at Exit 3
- Redevelopment Opportunity (Mobil Oil/Patros – Trane Plant 6 area)
- Kane Street Community Garden
- City Housing Replacement Projects
- Comprehensive Rezoning – 1995
- Employment Centers (Airport Industrial Park, Mid-City Industrial Area)

One discussion centered around moving the 4-lane highway up around the Bridgeview Plaza area, when the Exit 3 exchange is being redone (in 2015), which would utilize waterfront property.

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PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS OF STRATEGIES SURVEY

Brian discussed the survey results with the committee. Following is a list of the top responses in each category. The full survey results will be posted on the web.

Powell Hood Hamilton Washburn:

- Big Splash: Reinvest La Crosse (5)
La Crosse Neighborhood (3)
- Low hanging Fruit: La Crosse Neighborhood Partnership (3)
Nuisance Ordinance (3)
Better Enforcement of Laws (3)
Neighborhood Commission (3)

Campus Goosetown:

- Big Splash: Themed Student Housing (3)
Student Overlay District (3)
- Low Hanging Fruit: Reduce number of unrelated (4)
Themed Student Housing (3)
Landlord & Rental Licensing (3)

North side:

- Big Splash: La Crosse Neighborhood Partnership (3)
Reinvest La Crosse (3)
- Low Hanging Fruit: Housing Rehab Program (2)
Neighborhood Commission (2)
Renovation Design Assistance (2)
Paint & Fix Up (2)
Better Enforcement of Laws (2)
Nuisance Ordinance (2)

City Wide:

- Big Splash: Reinvest La Crosse (5)
Private Equity Group (5)
Community Reinvestment (5)
- Low Hanging Fruit: Urban Living Marketing (5)
Better Education & Enforcement of Codes & Standards (5)
Better Enforcement of Laws (5)

Staff is hoping to get going on the draft of the overall report for this committee. Brian suggested meeting once a month to give staff more time to begin drafting the plan.

Suggested Tentative Timeline

Nov. 1 – Send out draft of Section A of the report

Nov. 8 – HTF will meet to review draft of Section A and give feedback

Dec. 6 – Send out draft of Section B of the report

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Dec. 13 – HTF will meet to review draft of Section B and give feedback

Jan. 3 – Send out Sections C&D – tactics and strategies for attacking issues and implementation of the plan

Jan. 10 – HTF will meet to review draft of Sections C & D and give feedback and input.

End of Jan. - Public Meeting

Early February – wrap up of plan and recommend approval to City Council and County Board.

There are still some few items that staff is following up on. They have had conversations with Commonwealth Development in Madison which is a CDC in Madison. Another survey will be given to the committee once staff gets the final report drafted.

NEXT MEETING: November 8, 2011

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Facebook update – Briann Jones
- Discussion of the police reports from the 420 calls in 5 residences.
- Review draft of Section A and get feedback

ADJOURN

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

The above minutes may be approved, amended or corrected at the next meeting.

Recorded by Terri Pavlic