

8. COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

Background

Planning for the Park DuValle Neighborhood transformation began in 1993 when the Housing Authority of Louisville (HAL) began planning the rehabilitation of Cotter Homes and Lang Homes. The planning process grew out of the Empowerment Zone Application Plan done by a 100 person Community Board and has continued to benefit from extensive and ongoing involvement of community stakeholders. Residents from both Cotter and Lang Homes were joined by surrounding neighbors, businesses, police, clergy, social service providers and community institutions to participate in each phase of the planning, including the HUD approved demolition/disposition plan that funded the replacement units in Phase I of the Transformation Plan. The comprehensive vision for the Park DuValle Redevelopment emerged through this process in 1994 and entailed the demolition of both Cotter and Lang Homes as well as almost 400 dilapidated privately owned homes, and the relocation of the Public Housing Residents.

The Park DuValle Neighborhood Advisory Council (PDNAC), which comprises a membership including community stakeholders, neighborhood leaders, former residents of Cotter and Lang Homes, city leaders and housing authority staff, was developed by HAL to continue to engage residents and stakeholders in creating the vision for Park DuValle as the planning and implementation of the neighborhood transformation moved forward. PDNAC meetings began in June 1994 and continue to be held monthly at the neighborhood police station located across the street from the DuValle Education Center.

Preparation of the Park DuValle HOPE VI Revitalization Plan

Over the past year to guide the preparation of this Revitalization Plan, HAL and the City of Louisville developed a committee and governance structure led by the Park DuValle Policy Board, which is made up of the Mayor, two representatives of the community, the Chairperson of the Housing Authority of Louisville and the President of the Louisville Community Development Bank and oversees the work groups responsible for the development of the plan. The Chairs of each work group, representatives from HAL and the development team meet bi-weekly to coordinate the progress of the plan, ensure consistency and to discuss recommendations to be made to the Policy Board.

The Community Builders, as the designated developer, works closely with each work group, and in particular is responsible for the staffing, planning and implementation of the Self-Sufficiency and Community Building component of the Revitalization Plan.

A. Location and Frequency of Meetings

The Community Building Work Group initially began by meeting weekly at the DuValle Education Center, located in the heart of the neighborhood. As the work of the group began to take shape and sub-committees were formed, the Work Group began to meet bi-weekly while the sub-committees which are chaired by members of the work group began to meet weekly to create

their particular recommendations for the overall plan. Updates from the Work Group are provided for each monthly PDNAC meeting.

B. Designation of Participants

The Community Building Work Group was established to coordinate the development of the Self-sufficiency and Community Building Plan for the new and revitalized Park DuValle neighborhood. The Work Group is composed of members of the PDNAC who are representatives of the neighborhood, HAL special program staff, the Office of the Mayor, and key institutions providing services in the community. (The participant list is included as Attachment 8-1). As previously stated, The Community Builders, Inc., on behalf of HAL has the primary responsibility for staffing and coordinating the work of this task force.

To establish a foundation for defining the Community Building and Self-sufficiency strategies for the new neighborhood, The Community Builders, Inc. hired a team of program evaluators to conduct a two-part "environmental scan" in January and February of 1997. The scan included a review of relevant documents (the HOPE VI proposal, the Empowerment Zone proposal, the Jefferson County Welfare Reform Plan and the plan for the Nia Center), and interviews with many stakeholders including leadership from among community residents; organizations and institutions; business representatives; key staff from the Mayor's office, the Housing Authority and other governmental agencies with important roles in the community. The interviews form the basis for the preliminary recommendations of focus areas for the Community Building Work Group and continue to build on the program needs, housing and neighborhood amenities identified by the Cotter and Lang residents during the early revitalization planning and HOPE VI application process. (The Environmental Scan report is included as Attachment 9-1).

The results and recommendations from the Environmental Scan were presented to the Work Group, the Park DuValle Management Team and the PDNAC on October 8, 1997. The recommendations revolved around five themes that the evaluators believe will achieve the goal of developing and sustaining Park DuValle as a stable, successful mixed-income community:

- A focus on Life Long Learning
- The development of a civic infrastructure that will sustain the new Park DuValle neighborhood
- New employment opportunities
- Building on neighborhood assets and amenities
- Health and social services that adapt to a changing neighborhood and health care environment.

The work group accepted these broad recommendations from the evaluators, and identified three additional issues needed to be addressed throughout the planning and implementation process:

1. Community Management - the need for continued input and participation by residents in the Revitalization Planning and decision making process. TCB and the Work

Group will identify additional outreach and communication mechanisms beyond the monthly PDNAC meetings to keep former and surrounding neighborhood residents informed of the progress on the plan. The community management process will form the basis for the development of the civic infrastructure and neighborhood governance aspects of the community building component of the plan.

2. Enhanced Employment Opportunities - the need to concentrate on bringing substantive, long-term employment to the neighborhood, to create contextual job specific training that would ultimately lead to job placement and increased access to workforce development opportunities to link unemployed residents and to support marginally employed residents as they develop their job skills and experience.
3. Outreach to low income tenants - to identify residents who may have applied to return to the transformed Park DuValle and did not meet the selection criteria for The Oaks (the first phase of the Park DuValle neighborhood redevelopment) and link them with services that will assist them in addressing the issues that disqualified them. Selection to live at The Oaks means that applicants have met the following criteria: a rental history with no lease violations within the last three (3) years; no late payments in the last recordable twelve (12) months; meet all housekeeping inspection standards within the last three (3) years; head of household must either be employed or a full time student of an accredited institution or currently enrolled in a bonafide job training or vocational program that will enhance employment opportunity; all household members eighteen (18) years of age and older must pass a criminal records check.

The Community Building Work Group initially divided itself into four sub-committees (Self Sufficiency, Community Assets, Lifelong Learning and Community Life and Safety). These were eventually combined into three working sub committees with Lifelong learning as the organizing theme for the community building strategy:

- Self Sufficiency which includes employment opportunities and workforce readiness
- Civic Infrastructure which includes community life and safety
- Lifelong learning and community assets

C. Issues addressed and actions taken by the Community Building Work Group

Community Management

To increase the level of knowledge and participation by neighborhood residents, the Work Group planned and held a Community Forum at the DuValle Education Center on November 15, 1997. Over 400 invitations were sent to the surrounding neighbors, information about the forum was posted and announced in neighborhood churches and at the programs housed at the DuValle Education Center. Thirty (30) residents and stakeholders attended the forum, which included an

overview of the Park DuValle Revitalization Plan, breakout groups with facilitators and a formal survey. Topics centered around what the residents perceive as viable services using as a base of discussion the results of the environmental scan. So far, nine local residents have committed to participate in the planning process and to date over 85 surveys have been completed and returned to the Work Group. (The survey and results are included as Attachment 9-2).

To increase community participation as the neighborhood is repopulated, members of the Community Building Work Group have been involved in door to door outreach with the new residents of The Oaks (the first phase of the redevelopment effort in the neighborhood) to inform them of both the PDNAC meetings and the Working Group Committee meetings. Four new residents from The Oaks have become active participants in the Self sufficiency and Community Building planning efforts. The Community Building Work Group will continue its outreach efforts as more residents return to the area.

In addition to focusing on resident participation, the Work Group has recruited specific key institutions and community stakeholders including the Louisville Free Public Library, the University of Louisville, and representatives of the Head start program to participate in the Work Group based on their areas of expertise, interest and willingness to participate in the planning and implementation process.

Outreach to low income residents

By identifying public housing and low income residents who are interested in moving into the new neighborhood but may need assistance to meet the eligibility criteria (described earlier), the Work Group will be able to develop self-sufficiency programming specifically geared to their needs and engage potential new residents in the ongoing community building and civic infrastructure planning activities. The Work Group has begun by inviting each family that applied to the Housing Authority for residency at The Oaks and was not accepted, The Work Group is currently inviting each of these families to participate in Work Group meetings to provide updated information on the revitalization effort, development of the work plan, and to enlist their continued participation in the planning and implementation process. These families, including some who are former Cotter/Lang residents and some from other housing authority properties, are being targeted as likely participants in the self-sufficiency programming described in section 9, as they have already expressed interest in living in the newly transformed neighborhood.. In addition, Work Group members have been doing door-to-door outreach to invite the new residents at The Oaks into the self-sufficiency and community building planning process.

Increase opportunities for employment

The Private Industry Council, which is responsible for a significant proportion of workforce development and job placement activities in Louisville, has been actively involved in the development of the self-sufficiency component that is described in detail in Section 9 of the revitalization plan. In addition to participating in the employment initiatives currently underway in the City, the Work Group is also developing a means for the HOPE VI project to participate

in two additional workforce development and employment initiatives currently in the planning stages: the Parkway Place Initiative and the Jefferson County Welfare-to-Work initiative, specifically the Turning It Around Program for non-custodial parents in the community. Both of these initiatives are targeted to low-income families, many of whom may be former Cotter/Lang residents living in housing authority developments and could be assisted in meeting the employment criteria for residency in the new Park DuValle. These programs and initiatives will be described in detail in Section 9, The Self-Sufficiency and Community Building Plan.

D. Ongoing Role of the Community Building Work Group

The creation of a strong neighborhood organization with the capacity and leadership to oversee, develop and evaluate neighborhood activities and services represents a critical and on-going task for the Community Building Work Group.

The Community Building Work Group's next phase of activity will build on the working partnerships and relationships among new residents, developers, HAL, community stakeholders and businesses that began during the development of this plan in the following ways:

Ongoing Planning and Implementation

The Work Group will continue to oversee the planning and early phases of implementation of the Self sufficiency and Community Building component of the Revitalization Plan. Specifically the Work Group will work with The Community Builders to accomplish the following:

- Identify and participate in the process of hiring staff identified in the Self-sufficiency and Community Building Work plan.
- Develop the Family Action Plan components that will be used to track the progress and outcomes in the Self-sufficiency plan.
- Further identify community partners and collaborations to provide services and programs in the Park DuValle program.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation tools to track program outcomes.

Community and Civic Structure

The Work Group will continue to work with both The Community Builders and the PDNAC to develop the parameters for a new community and civic structure that will serve the neighborhood. It will work with The Community Builders to continue the community discussions that will identify the community norms, develop a shared purpose for the community, link the informal networks in the community and ultimately create a structure that focuses on developing a community organization that fosters neighborhood organization and builds on the assets and resident participants. The new structure may include but not be limited to the following elements that were recommended in the environmental scan:

Neighborhood Association

The Work Group will develop recommendations on how the Park DuValle Neighborhood Advisory Council (PDNAC) evolves into a resident led neighborhood association. The group will also develop recommendations on what the relationship between the new association and the Policy Board should be and develop the initial focus for capacity building and leadership training activities.

Self-sufficiency/Community Building Evaluation Committee

To ensure that self-sufficiency and community building activities are accomplishing the goals set out in the plan and meeting the needs of the residents, The Community Builders, along with the Work Group, will develop a community based evaluation structure. One possible scenario would be the evolution of the Work Group into an evaluation committee of the larger Park DuValle Neighborhood Association. This committee would have a formal role in the development of programs, provider selection, monitoring and evaluation of services and contracts. TCB would provide the reporting format for contracts as well as the monitoring forms to enable the committee to evaluate and provide feedback to providers and assist the Neighborhood Association as they respond to the growth and continually changing priorities and needs in the neighborhood.