

Senate Community Relations Committee meeting

12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Community Human Services

November 19, 2013

Attendees: Zeba Ahmed, Browne Fellow; Keith Caldwell, Social Work; Laurie Cohen, ULS, CRC Co-Chair; Rafael Engel, Social Work; Megan Fabbri, OPDC; Lovie J. Jackson Foster, Social Work, CRC Co-Chair; Linda Hartman, Health Sciences Library System; Mona Kazour, SGB; Samantha Levinson, Browne Fellow; Helen Petracchi, Social Work; Hilary Scherer, OPDC; Kannu Sahni, Community Relations; Tara Sherry-Torres, OPDC; Tracy Soska, Social Work; Trevor Smith, CHS; John Wilds, Community Relations; Wanda Wilson, OPDC

The minutes from October 15th were approved with no corrections.

Film screening by Browne Fellows

Zeba Ahmed and Samantha Levinson showed the film they created about South Oakland

They completed a community assessment and spoke with residents about the strengths/weaknesses of their neighborhood

Some of the characteristics include: poor housing stock; few businesses; tax-delinquent properties; little parking availability; few family households; long-term residents; slumlords; living in the shadow of Central Oakland

Conclusion drawn from interviews – South Oakland needs to forge a forward-thinking identity

Purpose of film/content of film

Goal was to force a dialogue about the neighborhood and determine a direction

Film served as a unique solution to a problem

Main themes of the film – housing problems, absentee landlords, business district not what it used to be, overcrowding, more services distributed to Central Oakland versus South Oakland; lack of resources for health care and child care

Positive aspects of neighborhood – proximity to Downtown and South Side, friendly neighbors, safety, diversity, “porch sitters”

Future actions/recommendations based on project

When people were asked what they wanted from their neighborhood, responses varied from: more community events, to improved relations between residents and students, to the feeling that South Oakland needed to have its own identity

Plans were discussed for encouraging wider distribution of the film, getting the word out about the neighborhood’s strengths, possibly updating the film as time passes

OPDC’s Employee Assisted Housing Strategy

Wanda Wilson spoke about the EAH strategy, which grew out of the Oakland 2025 Plan. Its main purpose is to restore stability in the housing market in Oakland

There is a committee looking into these issues, and two consultants have been hired to assist with the process of implementing the program

The plan would offer incentives to people to purchase a home in Oakland

Through a Land Bank program, OPDC would acquire homes specifically for sale (not for rent) and have a supply available for local employees

Examples from other universities have been examined for their similarities and strategies

Questions raised regarding Employee Assisted Housing in Oakland

What opportunities exist to massage the housing market to reach this goal?

What will the neighborhood look like in the future, given the present trends?

Is this ideal, or should something different be done? Can we be more proactive?

What is the benefit of more University of Pittsburgh employees living in Oakland?

It was decided to re-examine these questions as a committee, and bring them up again at a later date

Minutes submitted by Laurie Cohen, December 12, 2013

Next meeting on January 14th, from 12:00 – 2:00 p.m., in 272 Hillman Library