



Hill District Consensus Group
Community Meeting
Thursday October 11th, 2012

THE COMMUNITY TABLE

Welcome & Introductions – Carl Redwood

Bus Rapid Transit Presentation – GetTherePGH (www.gettherepgh.org)

Who are the presenters?

“Built by a collaborative group of over 30 community planners, innovators, nonprofits, community leaders, cyclists, city officials, educators, investors, neighborhood developers, business leaders, and civic partnerships.”

What is Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)?

“BRT provides fast, frequent transit service along major corridors using special buses to provide a smooth, comfortable travel experience. Perhaps more importantly, however, is the transformative effect BRT can have on the communities it serves.”

What is the BRT Pittsburgh plan?

“The proposed plan would focus on the **corridor between Downtown and Oakland** created by Fifth and Forbes Avenues. Further expansion east will also be studied so BRT could provide additional connections to Squirrel Hill, North Oakland, East Liberty, Bloomfield, Shadyside, Friendship and East Liberty.”

How does this affect the Hill District?

The BRT team is exploring additional connections in the Hill District: A Dinwiddie Connection, Bentley/Robinson Rt 81, and Webster/Allequippa Rt 83.

Feedback

Residents expressed concerns about the loss of the hill circulator and recent service cuts. Many seniors and folks with disabilities depend on accessible public transportation to travel inside and outside the neighborhood. There is no easy way to get from the Hill into Uptown and vice versa. Many folks need reliable buses to get to work, to appointments, to get groceries, and more.

Residents asked why the team did not consider Centre Avenue as a major corridor for BRT. Earlier, the team mentioned that Fifth and Forbes are very crowded, high traffic corridors. In contrast, residents pointed to Centre Avenue as a logical alternative to those busy major corridors. Centre Ave has relatively low traffic and lots of space. Turning Centre Avenue into a major BRT corridor would spur economic development, connect the Hill with rest of the city, and generate greater benefit for our community.

The BRT acknowledged those observations and mentioned that they did try to explore the idea in the early phases. The team said they discussed the idea with the Hill Community Development Corporation. From their understanding, the Hill CDC said that BRT development would impact parking and there would not be enough adequate parking space for the Centre Avenue corridor.

With these concerns in mind, residents and attendees approached the Consensus Group to form a neighborhood bus committee to address transportation issues in our community.

SPUR Program Update – Allison Lee Mann (www.spurinitiative.org)

The SPUR program is offering long term credit courses healthcare and sustainable energy. The courses offer training to get a job in these up-and-coming fields. The expenses are covered by the government.

Grocery Store Update – Rob Farmer

The Hill House had to bridge a 7.8 million dollar funding gap for the grocery store project. After the project re-design, the team had to re-calculate the cost to cover all of the equipment and materials to go inside the store. They have had a tremendous past couple of weeks and expressed confidence that they will plug the gap very soon. Just recently, they successfully applied for and received a federal grant, have brought their other funders back to the table, and even received a contribution from the Growth Fund.

Growth Fund Update – Karen Eady-Lockett

The Growth Fund application process is ready. The fund is currently offering revolving grants and business loans. Please apply on POISE Foundation website. More info soon!

FOCUS Pittsburgh – Paul Abernathy

FOCUS offers a number of services helping those in need in our community. Services include food, shelter, community space, ministry, and more. Their newest initiative focuses on providing food for kids on reduced price lunch programs. These students can receive reduced price lunches during the school day. But once these kids go home for the weekend, many may not have the same access to food. FOCUS is asking for donations to fund healthy snacks and food, fresh fruit, and nutritious food. The food will help feed kids who go to all local schools.

Contact Paul Abernathy at 412 334-0917 or Eric Ewell at 412-621-3341

Hill District Consensus Group – Next Meeting

Our next monthly meeting will be Nov 9th @ 10am in the Hill House

Mission

The mission of the Hill District Consensus Group is to work together through the differences and with the commonalities, to establish and enforce standards and processes in all aspects of community life: economic, political, spiritual, and social, for the ongoing health and prosperity of the community.