



THE COMMUNITY TABLE

Hill District Consensus Group Friday, September 14th @ 10am Monthly Meeting Minutes

New Commander of Police Zone 2

Commander Holmes introduced himself to the members of the Consensus Group. Mr. Holmes grew up in Penn Hills and served in the Hill on patrol and canine duty in the early 2000s. In addition to taking on his new responsibilities, the new commander also offered to organize “Walk with the Cop” programs. He invited residents to walk with officers in the community to point out building issues, safety concerns, or even just to talk with an officer. The Consensus Group would like to welcome Commander Eric Holmes to the Hill District!

Projects Update from the Consensus Group

Block Leader Initiative – Robert Bowden, Community Organizer

Robert gave a brief update on the Block Leader Initiative and its recent successes. The Initiative aims to better organize and empower our community by building neighborhood block clubs. By joining and leading block clubs, Hill residents can work together to better manage and improve our neighborhoods, addressing issues such as public safety, building violations, vacant property, and more. In August, Upper Hill residents contacted the Consensus Group about overgrown lots on Clarissa, Anaheim, and Lyons streets. With the help of the Consensus Group, Block Leaders and volunteers organized and completed a clean-up event on those streets. The clean-up removed trash such as broken glass, cut back weeds from abandoned lots, and rescued the sidewalk for community use. Please consider becoming a block leader or joining a block club near you!

To learn more, please visit the “Organizing Campaigns” section of our website or contact us at (412) 697-4692.

Vacant Property Strategy for the Hill District – Bonnie Young-Laing, Co-Director

The vacant property strategy is entering its final phases in the next couple of weeks. The consultant team hosted community meetings in each of the neighborhoods covered in the strategy. At these meetings, the team presented their findings, provided recommendations, and sought feedback from residents about vacant properties in their area. Specifically, the team identified several properties within each neighborhood and asked residents what they think should be done about them. The team is creating maps to hang up and attract additional input. The Consensus Group should have those available to the community soon.

The next step is Implementation: prioritize recommendations, identify property owners, fund the strategy;

Additionally, neighborhood block leaders attended the annual Holy Grounds gathering in the Upper Hill, where residents discussed issues such as vacant properties and asked city officials for help addressing these problems.

Also in August, the Consensus Group hosted a Town Hall meeting regarding the Hill Casino Fund.

Representative Wheatley gave an overview of the Fund and answered questions from the audience. At the

earliest, the fund should be ready by the end of the year. More information is available on the Consensus Group website.

Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) Centre Avenue Request-for-Proposals (RFP)

The URA released a RFP for lots that they own along Centre Avenue, from Devilliers to Soho St. Four potential developers submitted applications, including two local resident developers. The local groups include Ujamaa Collective and FOCUS Pittsburgh and they gave presentations to Consensus Group members. The other two developers are E-Properties and the Housing Authority of Pittsburgh, who did not attend this meeting.

Ujamaa Collective Proposal – LaKeisha Wolf, Vice President of Business Affairs and Cooperative Development

Currently, the Ujamaa Collective operates their Open-Air Marketplace at 2030 Centre Ave. Originally, they planned to construct a building on the site, which is owned by the URA. When the Centre Avenue RFP came out, Ujamaa found out a bigger developer was interested in the site and the developer was not interested in a local partnership with Ujamaa. As a result, Ujamaa turned their focused to three lots along Centre, between Kirkpatrick and Soho. Their proposal includes:

- Indoor Marketplace – For short and long term leases, spaces for startups and existing local businesses
- Business Incubator – To lower cost of starting new businesses and provide shared space and resources
- Food Café – to provide healthy food, salads, vegan, and others foods for the community
- Boutique

As this is just a brief summary, please contact the Ujamaa Collective for full details at 412-228-5160 - <http://www.ujamaacollective.org/>

FOCUS Pittsburgh Proposal – Paul Abernathy, Director of FOCUS Pittsburgh

- Build Upon African American Cultural Legacy
- Housing Development without Displacement
- “Open Door” center – on the first floor by design to welcome all
- Volunteer Medical Health Clinic – for folks who don’t qualify for MediCare; free behavioral healthcare

As this is just a brief summary, please contact FOCUS Pittsburgh for full details at 412-261-1234 - <http://focuspittsburgh.org/>

Coincidentally, the Ujamaa Collective and FOCUS Pittsburgh submitted proposals for parts of the same lots. Both commented that the 27 day long RFP process was not much time to work with, but they are committed to forming a partnership and working together to develop these spaces for the benefit of the community.

Next Monthly Meeting of the Consensus Group:

The evening of Thursday, October 11th @ 5:30pm

Hill House Kaufmann Auditorium, next to the Hill House