

## Report on Southtown Town Hall

### *Introduction*

At the January 24, 2012 City Council meeting, a group of citizens voiced their concerns regarding the transfer of funds from the Southtown TIF to the Hospitality Improvement Zone TIF. While the Council voted against the transfer, questions remained regarding the use of available revenue. Councilman Clyde Gulley organized a town hall meeting at the Frank Campbell Community Center on February 2, 2012 with residents of Southtown, people who work in Southtown and other community stakeholders. Approximately 80 people attended the meeting.

The first part of the meeting was a presentation by City staff that included an overview of Tax Increment Financing law, specific information about the Southtown TIF, and a list of eligible and ineligible uses for TIF funds. A copy of the presentation is attached. The second part of the meeting allowed individual citizens to share their ideas about needs and potential uses of funds within Southtown.

### *Community Input*

During the second half of the meeting, citizens were asked to share their thoughts on needs in Southtown. Individuals could share their concerns or idea verbally or write their ideas on comment cards. Verbal input was captured by staff, which used a computer to project results on a screen for the audience to read. Ideas were included in the list regardless of eligibility. All the ideas are shown below. Those in bold are either a TIF-eligible idea or one that warrants more investigation to determine its eligibility.

#### Verbal Input

1. Contact state legislators about changing TIF law.
2. **Rehabilitate Carver Center.**
3. Improve housing on the South Side.
4. Create programs for youth.
5. **New parking lot for Bethel church and park district.**
6. **Finish MLK to airport.**
7. **Job training programs for minority youth.**
8. Build capacity for minority construction firms.
9. **Fix lights in Spring Grove (3 of 10 not working). Install new ornamental lights.**
10. Mentoring.
11. **Use remaining land in Southtown for single family housing.**
12. Extend TIF district beyond MacArthur.
13. **Sidewalk and alley improvements.**
14. Hip hop and other arts programs to motivate children.
15. Start "clean watch" (improve cleanliness of neighborhoods).
16. Access more federal programs.
17. METEC – improve homeownership. Money for downpayment assistance programs.
18. Project for ex-felons to reintegrate into community (housing, jobs).
19. **Rebuild single-family homes and condominiums so that people can come back to Southtown.**
20. Decent grocery store (fresh produce and meat), pharmacy, other retail.
21. Need new TIF for Western street.
22. Use Carver Center as a business incubator (for people who live in Southtown).
23. Light industry along Jefferson.

24. Health/fitness center within Carver Center.
25. **Repair pool (Carver pool – Park District).**
26. **Help Peoria Mineral Springs.**
27. Litter clean up.
28. **New/improved sidewalks, streetlights and alleys.**
29. **Complete 7<sup>th</sup> Street.**
30. **Parking lot next to Carver Center.**
31. **Build on the heritage of Southtown (change name to “Heritage Park”). Grant for wayfinding.**
32. **Move money from Southtown to Warehouse District to build a neighborhood retail center (on Jefferson).**
33. **Build a parking deck (in Southtown or Warehouse District).**
34. **Complete MacArthur greenway.**

#### Written Input

1. **Job training for CVC at Carver Center Construction Program to put black male to work right away. 2 year building.**
2. 1015 S. Matthews needs to be ADA improved.
3. Create programs that will assist, rebuild families and educate families concerning drugs, recreation, getting families back together so that crime rate can go down and people become productive members of society so that more money can be put in our communities (in Harrison area).
4. Renovation on Western bus area. Widen Martin St. to accommodate school buses and heavy traffic.
5. **Better lights within (Spring Grove) subdivision ex: replace cheap wooden poles with metal ones like those on RB Garrett.**
6. **Improve fences between City Scape and Spring Grove.**
7. **Redo MLK Drive between Richard Allen and Union Hill**
8. Extend TIF past Western. There are a lot of dilapidated houses on Howett, Millman, Butler, Martin so forth, need sidewalks, street lights, need Carver Center open.
9. **New street lights (ornamental) for (Spring Grove) subdivision. Currently several street lights are not working.**
10. I would love to see a transition living facility for girls out of foster care, but need further structure & guidance. I have a bldg. in mind on the southside; as well have a program set in place, 501C-3, tax exempt bylaws etc.
11. **Better lights in the neighborhood.**
12. **Improve MacArthur Highway Bridge (over Romeo B Garrett).**

#### *Determining Eligibility*

The attendees of the town hall clearly articulated a number of community needs within both Southtown and on the South Side in general. Illinois state law (65 ILCS 5/Art. 11 Div. 74.4) specifically enumerates which types of costs are eligible to be funded with TIF revenue. Many of the ideas and concerns expressed involved programming to help improve outcomes for the people – especially youth – from this area. These activities are clearly ineligible uses of TIF funds, though the City could work with other community partners to find funding streams that might be applicable. Other ideas involved locations outside of the Southtown TIF or were otherwise not applicable to this process.

Staff has grouped similar ideas together (i.e. Spring Grove lighting was mentioned four times) and screened them for eligibility. Below are the issues that warrant continued consideration for use of Southtown TIF funds. Staff has further segmented the ideas into those that are clearly eligible and those that require additional investigation.

#### Clearly Eligible

- *Renovate Carver Center* – The law states that “rehabilitation, reconstruction or repair or remodeling of existing public or private buildings” is an eligible expense.
- *Improve lighting in Spring Grove* – Street lighting would be included within the category of “construction of public works or improvements.”
- *Improve sidewalks and alleys* – This would be included in “construction of public works or improvements.”
- *Complete 7<sup>th</sup> Street (improve Martin Luther King between Union hill and Richard Allen)* - This would be included in “construction of public works or improvements.”
- *Improve MacArthur Highway bridge* – This would be included in “construction of public works or improvements.”
- *Improve fences between Spring Grove and CityScape apartments* – This is an eligible cost. In 2005, the City utilized \$20,260 in TIF funds to improve this fence.

#### Possibly Eligible

- *Construction of parking lots and decks* – The construction of parking areas fits within the “public works” category of eligibility so long as the property is public. Staff will need to further investigate the question of parking lot construction for Bethel United Methodist Church.
- *Finish Martin Luther King Drive to the airport* – While street improvement is clearly eligible, most of this route is located outside of the Southtown TIF. In limited cases, TIF funds can be used on improvements outside the TIF so long as they benefit the TIF. Staff will need to determine what improvements need to be made and how TIF funds could be used.
- *Job training programs* – While programmatic costs are generally ineligible for TIF funding, the law does allow funding of:

“Job training and retraining projects, including the cost of ‘welfare to work’ programs implemented by businesses located within the redevelopment project area.”

and, separately:

“Job training, retraining, advanced vocational education or career education, including but not limited to courses in occupational, semi-technical or technical fields leading directly to employment, incurred by one or more taxing districts, provided that such costs (i) are related to the establishment and maintenance of additional job training, advanced vocational education or career education programs for persons employed or to be employed by employers located in a redevelopment project area ...”

Staff would need to investigate this opportunity and work with Southtown employers and agencies to develop a potential program.

- *Construction of housing* - While TIF funds cannot be used for new construction, funds could be available for land acquisition, site preparation and any necessary public infrastructure. TIF funds can also be used to renovate existing housing.
- *Repair pool at Gwynn Family Aquatic Center* – This project is likely covered either as a “public work” or “renovation of a public facility.” Staff needs to work with the Peoria Park District to determine the extent of the repairs needed.
- *Help Peoria Mineral Springs* – The Peoria Mineral Springs facilities are partly in the Southtown TIF. Staff needs to learn more about their needs and determine what assistance might be available in the TIF.
- *Build on heritage of Southtown* –Improved signage and way-finding might be allowable as a “public work.”
- *Build a neighborhood commercial center on Jefferson* – As with housing, TIF funds cannot be utilized for new construction but could be used for land assembly and site preparation. This project would require a transfer of funds from the Southtown TIF into the Warehouse District TIF.
- *Complete MacArthur Greenway* – This would likely be considered a “public work.”

#### *Next Steps*

Now that input has been sought and ideas have been screened for eligibility, the City needs to work through a process of defining the scope of projects; investigating eligibility; and determining a budget. Councilman Gulley will work with staff to identify a small group of 4-8 community stakeholders who will assist in this process, as well as prioritize within the list of projects and potentially identify additional projects. This group will include representatives from the Spring Grove neighborhood, Carver Center, PCCEO and other interested community groups. The first meeting of this group will be during the week of February 20, 2012. The goal is to present to the City Council a complete list of projects to be funded at the April 10, 2012 regular meeting.