

First Suburbs Coalition
September 9, 2011
Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order by co-chairs Steve Dennis, Mayor of Grandview.

Transit Report

Karen Clawson, MARC transportation planner, provided an update on transit related activities underway in the first suburbs. This includes construction work beginning on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) improvements from last year's federal USDOT TIGER grant. This includes work along Shawnee Mission Blvd and Metcalf Ave in Johnson County and work along State Ave in Wyandotte County. There is also some additional BRT work going on along North Oak Trafficway, north of the river, and 24/40 highway in Jackson County.

Karen also reported on Alternative Analyses underway along the Rock Island Corridor, I-70 East Corridor, and US 71 South Corridor. These studies are looking at what the best transit strategy is in each corridor and we anticipate work to be completed in 2012. In addition, Karen reported on the alternatives analysis for a street car system in downtown Kansas City, MO. They have narrowed the route to either Main or Grand and hope to make a decision by October.

Karen wrapped up her presentation by indicating that a transit study was underway to improve transit service to the KU Med Center and the adjacent communities. The study was initiated by the mayors of Roeland Park and the UG.

HUD Community Planning Challenge Grant

Dean Katerndahl, First Suburbs Coalition staff coordinator, presented a summary of the proposed HUD Community Planning Challenge Grant that would focus on the first suburbs. The grant would develop a Sustainable Code Framework and apply that through code audits to eight communities: Grandview, Gladstone, Raytown, Independence, Prairie Village, Roeland Park, Fairway, and Mission. Other partners in the grant include the Unified Government and the district council of the Urban Land Institute. The grant request is for \$403,000 with a match of in-kind services of \$173,000. It was moved, seconded and approved that the First Suburbs Coalition should be a partner in the grant and the co-chairs were authorized to sign a letter of support.

Presentations to Governing Bodies and Other Audiences

Dean presented a PowerPoint on the history, work, and future goals of the First Suburbs Coalition. The intent of the PowerPoint is for it to be presented to governing bodies, planning commissions, and other community organizations in order to get better engagement in the work of the coalition. Although the general information was considered accurate the general feeling was that the PowerPoint was boring. There needs to be video clips on how the First Suburbs Coalition has impacted individual communities. Also it needs to focus more on telling stories, especially from the point of view of elected officials.

There was also a discussion about other topics that should be presented to governing bodies and other audiences. These included how to encourage redevelopment, the importance of transit, infrastructure issues, housing, and changing demographics.

Elected Officials Forum

The co-chairs are proposing that the First Suburbs Coalition host an elected officials forum to help inform elected officials what the First Suburbs Coalition is doing and how they can get involved. It would involve a presentation on the coalition and a discussion about the issues they should be addressing. As an enticement to attend it is proposed to do this at the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts and ask Bob Berkebile of BNIM architects to speak to sustainability and first suburbs and lead a tour of the new center.

There was support for the forum. It was decided that the program, including the tour should be kept to no more than 2 hours and that it should be done late afternoon/early evening on a Thursday. Mike Scanlon, Mission City Administrator, will try to make the arrangements.

Other Reports

Dean provided a brief update on the Creating Sustainable Places initiative and information on upcoming conferences and workshops were provided.

**First Suburbs Coalition
Planning Work Group
Meeting Summary and Recommendations
March 10, 2011**

The Planning Work Group met to follow through on the 2011 agenda set by the First Suburbs Coalition at its last meeting. The first item was a review of the survey of priorities conducted over the last 6 weeks. Twenty six persons responded to the survey representing just about every active first suburb member. A copy of the survey results is attached to this summary. After reviewing the survey results it was felt that the most immediate priorities were:

- Training, especially for elected officials, planning commissions and other internal audiences around such topics as the importance of infrastructure maintenance, promoting redevelopment and the difficulties in doing this, and the importance of transit to inner ring suburbs.
- Investment in the maintenance of existing infrastructure
- Development of a more robust transit system
- Allocation of funds, federal, state, and private, to support existing communities

The Planning Work Group discussed the importance of maintaining existing neighborhoods. It was first pointed out that neighborhoods are not just residences, but also the supporting commercial areas and institutions such as schools. That any strategy to maintain neighborhoods has to look at all elements of neighborhoods and what are the dynamics behind maintaining neighborhoods as vibrant places. We agreed to look closer at what this dynamic is and at best practices from around the region and the nation.

The First Suburbs Coalition wanted to consider whether communities needed to consider new forms of land use and development codes given the built out nature of these communities and the demographic, transportation, and development trends that are creating a “new normal.” Dean Katerndahl and Jeff Hirt of MARC suggested that the Sustainable Development Code of the Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute might provide a framework for considering new approaches to land use and development regulation that would be more redevelopment ready and sustainable while allowing communities to move at a pace that suits their situation. It was agreed that this would be a good approach and that MARC could work with the First Suburbs Coalition to develop a set of strategies and regulations that communities could choose from to address specific issues around redevelopment readiness and sustainability.

We briefly discussed the issues facing first suburbs and all communities regarding accommodating an aging population. It was agreed that before we tackle this issue we should get the new census data on aging in the first suburbs to assess the extent this is a growing issue and then draw on outside resources to develop a strategy. Also a related issue was brought up by Scott Wingerson of Gladstone that neighborhood groups are concerned not only about maintenance of homes owned by elderly residents, but what happens to those homes once the owner passes away. This is especially an issue if the house has been converted to accommodate universal design. This cycle of housing in neighborhoods is a major issue that the First Suburbs Coalition should address.

We agreed that we needed to continue to investigate the status of infrastructure investments and the consequences of reducing such investments. It was suggested that this might make a good university project.

Dean Katerndahl reported that the remodeling loan program with Community America Credit Union has been renewed and that we were in the process of developing some new marketing materials tying the program in with energy retrofit incentives. Also MARC is developing an energy retrofit web site that will include the loan program.

It was also brought up during the meeting that analyzing new census data was very important for the first suburbs. It appears that first suburbs continue to lose population and experience demographic shifts. It was agreed that MARC would sit down with the Planning Work Group as census data becomes available to figure out what it is telling us about the first suburbs.

Based on the above discussion the Planning Work Group recommends the following agenda for 2011:

- Develop one or more curriculums around key topics such as infrastructure investment, transit, and redevelopment strategies designed to be presented to city councils, planning commissions and other local government boards and organizations. The developed curriculums will be presented to first suburb local government organizations. This curriculum will be augmented by a speaker's bureau of outside experts around these topics.
- Pursue development of a report on the current status of infrastructure investment, the potential consequences of that investment, and strategies to address issues that are identified
- Develop a working definition of what constitutes a vibrant, sustainable neighborhood and identify best practices to help maintain such neighborhoods, including the recycling of homes
- Develop a set of land use and development code strategies, using the Sustainable Development Code of the Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute as the initial template, that first suburbs can consider adopting that help to make communities more redevelopment ready and sustainable
- Work with MARC over the year to better understand the "story" that is being told by the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey and develop a picture of key issues that are facing first suburbs