

**HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES & REDEVELOPMENT POLICY
COMMITTEE**
January 25, 2024

Members Present: *Council Member, Chair Alison Coombs*
 Council Member, Vice-Chair Ruben Medina
 Council Member, Crystal Murillo

Others Present: Scott Campbell, John Wesolowski, Jessica Prosser, Scott Brainard, Tim Joyce, Olly Hanson, Mattye Sisk, Melissa Mansfield, Andrea Amonick, Angela Garcia, Odie Anaya, Emily Fuller, Andrew Rael Y. Trujillo, Alicia Montoya, Mindy Parnes, Richard Goggins, Joseph DeHerrera, Andrea Wright, Richard Goggins

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Council Member Coombs welcomes everyone to the meeting.

MINUTES

November 2, 2023 minutes are approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jessica Prosser informs the committee that there is only one agenda item for the morning. She suggests taking some time to discuss standard reporting on HORNS throughout the year and invites committee members to share thoughts and ideas on topics, program updates, or information they would like. The committee will address these at the end of the meeting.

CM Coombs expresses gratitude to Jessica, and welcomes John Wesolowski, the new Deputy in the Housing and Community Services Department. John thanks CM Coombs for the welcome and mentions his 16 years with the city, transitioning from PROS to his current role. CM Coombs appreciates John joining and highlights the approval of the deputy position to work on the operation side, specifically with Animal Services Code and other significant departmental aspects. The committee looks forward to collaborating with John.

NEW ITEMS

2024 Neighborhood Improvement Grant Update

Summary of Issue and Discussion

Scott Campbell, Community Engagement Coordinator, presents this item. Scott provides a quick overview of the neighborhood grants program during the meeting. The City Council has approved \$60,000 for the program this year, with individual project grants capped at \$5,000 from the General Fund. The program aims to enhance the appearance of Aurora neighborhoods and strengthen community ties. He highlights five primary goals, focusing on both beautification and community building, internally and with partner organizations. He announces updates for the upcoming grant cycle. Three informational sessions are scheduled, with the first already held last night. The second session is set for next Thursday at noon, and the final session will take place the following Tuesday at 6:00 p.m., accommodating different schedules. All relevant information, including the application, will be posted on the AuroraGov.org/NeighborhoodGrants page. Participants are encouraged to meet

with community engagement coordinators after the sessions to discuss project ideas. This year, the application process will be hosted on Neighborly, a software used successfully by the YVP Team. Campbell anticipates an improved experience for applicants with more options. All information, including the application and guidebooks, should be available this week. The deadline for applications is April 19th at 5:00 p.m., and selected projects must complete their work and submit documentation by October 31st of this year.

Scott presents highlights from previous years. He mentions a cleanup project in Northwest Aurora, carried out by a group that has received awards multiple times in the past. He states that the group excel at navigating alleyways and cleaning up bulk trash. He presents a project that revamped median ways with water-wise vegetation, showcasing excellent landscaping. Another project in the Shadow Creek Community involves landscaping improvements and the installation of lighting in their green space. He also highlights a group that installed message boards around the community to foster unity and convey information to community members. He concludes the presentation and welcomes any questions.

Questions/Comments

CM Coombs asks CM Medina and CM Murillo for any questions. CM Medina expresses no questions and views the program as an excellent opportunity to connect with the community and undertake projects based on their preferences. Scott acknowledges and thanks CM Medina.

CM Member Murillo also states she has no questions. She expresses a positive opinion about the program, describing it as great and expressing excitement about continuing to invest in neighborhoods while incorporating community input into the process. Scott expresses gratitude in response.

CM Coombs expresses ongoing support for the program and raises a question about the distribution of neighborhood groups, noting a historical concentration in South Aurora. Scott responds by explaining that they address this through marketing efforts, spreading information at Town Hall meetings, and advertising widely. They collaborate with Code to identify relevant issues for grants, aiming to ensure representation across the city. While historical concentrations have occurred, Campbell highlights efforts to have at least one award in every Ward annually. The goal is to allocate funds where needed most, and they work with grantees to enhance their applications.

CM Coombs acknowledges the team's efforts, mentioning the proactive nature of Ward V residents and expressing gratitude for connecting with groups citywide. With no further questions, CM Coombs concludes the discussion, thanking Scott for the update and expressing anticipation for approving projects in the future. Scott expresses gratitude in response.

Outcome – This item is informational only.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

Jessica Prosser presents an overview of the agenda items from the previous year and the planned topics for the upcoming months. She highlights recurring discussions on neighborhood grants, which occur at the beginning, middle (for approvals), and end of the year (for project updates). Community investment financing rounds, incentivizing affordable housing, are held in spring and summer/fall. She mentions the traditional flex fund update for homelessness funding and a housing authority update in September. A housing strategy update, missed last year, is scheduled for the February

meeting. She notes ongoing topics, including land banking proposals (parcels) and updates on city-owned land. She mentions interviewing developers for a property on Colfax and Laredo, with updates expected. Other recurring topics involve youth violence prevention updates, shared with the Public Safety Committee, and operations of the homeless navigation campus. She invites input from committee members for additional topics, emphasizing flexibility and adapting to the committee's preferences in the revised Study Session methodology. She concludes by expressing openness to suggestions and planning for the year ahead.

CM Coombs expresses gratitude to Jessica for the updates, emphasizing the importance of following up on land banking. She asks CM Medina and CM Murillo for any questions.

CM Medina is interested in adding an agenda item regarding city-wide information on affordable housing, focusing on percentages and the approach to addressing the situation.

CM Murillo agrees with both contributions and highlights the forwarded email about mobile home parks. She suggests exploring opportunities to incorporate these naturally occurring sources of affordable housing into the land banking strategy. Recognizing the potential negative impact of selling such parks, she expresses willingness to collaborate with Jessica on this matter in the future.

CM Coombs adds a couple of agenda items. First, she emphasizes the need for ongoing conversations about code enforcement and the challenges they face in addressing habitability issues in the city. She plans to discuss this further with Jessica and John. Second, she raises concerns about the homelessness plan, specifically the family emergency sheltering plan for the city. She questions whether the city should rely on nonprofits or count on the counties for support. CM Coombs expresses satisfaction with the updates and indicates that these are the major concerns for now. She acknowledges that more issues may arise over time.

Jessica acknowledges the input, assuring CM Coombs that these issues are on their radar. She mentions that the plan for families experiencing homelessness is a priority for the Aurora at Home Group and assures him that it's part of an ongoing conversation and strategy. She appreciates the input, stating that they will ensure these topics are covered as they bring items forward. She suggests ongoing communication and feedback and mentions using the list from the previous year along with standard items to plan for the upcoming year. She assures that they will send the outlook for the year via email.

CM Coombs expresses appreciation, thanking Jessica for her response.

Updates from Community Members

None.

Next meeting:

Meeting Adjourned: 10:22 a.m.

APPROVED: 
Alison Coombs (Mar 15, 2024 19:15 MDT)

03/15/2024

Committee Chair, Alison Coombs