

PPA May 22, 2006 Community Meeting Housing & Transportation

The meeting started with two short informational presentations. Heather Benham gave a powerpoint on how housing affordability is determined, including federal and state guidelines. Dan Jones, the current interim director of Athens Transit, gave a brief talk about that organization and took questions.

Next, we began to prepare for information gathering. Facilitator Jim Austin gave a short presentation on interview techniques and “do’s and don’ts.” The H & T Committee then split into groups to brainstorm strategies for engaging different populations whose input the H & T Committee needs. These small groups were organized based on participants’ interest in working with a particular target population. Volunteers were solicited to facilitate for each group. Questions to be addressed were:

- potential interview questions
- events we should attend
- locations for interviews
- contacts

Notes are organized accordingly.

Finally, we asked people to indicate a subcommittee interest area within either Housing or Transportation. These interest areas were based on input from the first two meetings and will form the basis of the subcommittee structure for the H & T Committee.

EAST ATHENS AREA

Interviewers must be up front with that we have no funds to help with housing problems. We are only asking questions - not help with problems.

The following were listed as places/venues to meet and interview those affected by poverty:

- On the bus
- Nellie B. Community Center
- Burney & Blanen Streets
- Arch Street
- Our Daily Bread
- East Friendship Baptist Soup Kitchen
- Open Hearts Center
- Pada Royal – Iron Triangle
- 1725 East Broad Church of Christ

Possible interview questions:

- How can we improve ???? ????? of community?
- Anyone interested in being a home owner?

- What is your stumbling block – what is keeping you back?
- How do you feel about riding the bus?
- Why are you riding the bus? What is keeping you from having a car?
- What are you willing to do to get out of this situation?
- What are your housing and utility costs?

Question >> Can we reach the landlords?

UNDOCUMENTED RESIDENTS

- Need bus fares proportionate to income
- Housing > Matching funds from employer (in Mexico housing is provided by law thru a deduction from salary, along with retirement deduction)

CREDIT – LOAN – MOBILITY

- Have no traces of consistent payment (cash payments)
 - Bill not in their names
 - Closing > Patriot Act: picture ID (risky for lender)
 - Without ID, higher interest rate
 - Checking accounts not basis for loan
 - “We need legalization”
 - Have a house in Mexico, but need US house for children
- Students have no hope = cycle of poverty > Incentive would be to give social security number: more would graduate
 - Children want to work rather than go to school
 - American born children of undocumented barred from Medicare > no documents

TRANSPORTATION

- Need more regularity than once per hour
- Buses need to go through neighborhoods
- New transportation lines needed
- Transportation not effective, therefore not used

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1. Identify accessible housing on the bus route/lift area
2. Athens transit map of areas covered.
3. Assistance to people with disabilities/students transitioning from high school to work and independence or tech school, etc.
4. ACC should establish a public group of PWD to determine how to expend the SPLOST monies designated for accessibility.
5. Community-level alternatives and assistance bartering/trading services/resources

DEVELOPERS, BUILDERS & BANKERS

RE: What do we need to know & ask?

1. Barriers to affordable housing
2. How to break barriers > What ideas do you have?
3. Section 8 explanation
4. Listing property
5. Low income housing tax credits > what percent is rented to low income
6. Department of Community Affairs has various assistance for first-time buyers
7. Mixed income neighborhoods
8. Energy efficiency
9. Construction alternatives
10. ** Incentives to builders – 85K to 140K?
11. What programs do you offer? Disseminate this information?
12. Inclusionary zoning

TRANSIT USERS

1. Is your area covered by the current extended service routes? Why or Why not?
2. Are you willing to pay more for frequent service?
3. Do you understand the different costs associated with the bus service?
4. What do you know about the park-n-ride service?
5. What is link service?
6. What is the highest amount you expect to pay for bus service?
7. What is cost effective for you? >> Is \$1.50 too much?
8. Do you know how to obtain information from the bus service? >> 706-613-3430

CHURCHES

1. We all agree churches/congregations can be an important group to make aware of PPA and its mission.
2. Ask ministers what they are doing towards fighting poverty and if they want to expand what they do.
3. Ask ministers how to tackle the problem
4. Get community members involved.
5. Communicate to congregations what PPA is doing.
6. Set up information table outside churches (at conclusion of services??)
7. Learn about existing outreach programs.
8. Provide luncheon with ministers
9. Need list of what's being done.
10. We need a concrete message from the Steering Committee
11. Jobs > Connect persons with employers
12. What's the best way to empower the community?
13. Moral responsibility

NORTH ATHENS

Questions:

1. Would transportation preclude your decision to purchase a home? Why?
2. Accessibility to routes?
3. Do you understand how to make a request for service?

IN-TOWN ATHENS / ARTISTS & MUSICIANS

- Need to interview members of the artist community regarding the scarcity and expense of studio space >> rent keeps going up
- Need to talk to gallery owners, UGA art professors & club owners
- Questions for in-town residents:
 - How do you get around?
 - Do you use the transit system? Why or why not?
 - Determine who uses taxis and why
 - Why do you choose to live downtown?
- Should contact neighborhood associations about ways to reach those potentially impacted by PPA
- Go door-to-door to reach folks
- Set up booths at in-town grocery stores > Kroger @ Alps & Bells @ Hawthorne
- Use snowball approach >> When interview one person, ask for 5 names of others who may be interested in talking to PPA
- Need to address the gentrification of in-town neighborhoods.
 - rescind property taxes
 - tax rebate program
 - Ask residents how increased property taxes affect them > what do you sacrifice?
- Asks artists/musicians about realistic alternatives to obtaining work space in the face of increased rent and new uses for previously available space.
- Determine if in-town residents feel a sense of powerlessness.
- Could really use a “drunk bus” late night service in the interest of safety.

MISC COMMENTS

Transit needs to provide service to:

- All public facilities
- green-space areas like Sandy Creek Nature Center & Park
- All public schools
- Services (for instance, East Athens Neighborhood Clinic is a block from bus stop - not accessible for people with disabilities)
- Churches

Taxi zones are unrealistic