



Planning Team and City Official Meeting Notes
Tuesday, March 10th, 2020

Attendance

Adam Rosa (Camiros)
Benjamin Corpuz (Camiros)
Molly Majestic (Northwest Georgia Housing Authority)
Bekki Fox (City of Rome)
Napoleon Fielder (Northwest Georgia Housing Authority)
Melvin Scott (Northwest Georgia Housing Authority)
Jeff & Mary Margaret Mauer (Restoration Rome)
Hannah Phillips (Northwest Georgia Housing Authority)
Howard Gibson (Northwest Georgia Housing Authority)
Art Newell (City of Rome)
Regina Wright (Northwest Georgia Housing Authority)

Meeting Minutes

Camiros briefly introduced themselves and the East Rome Choice Neighborhood Plan to meeting attendees while also reviewing their past experience with other Choice Neighborhood Initiative projects. Meeting attendees were then asked to write down their desired outcomes for the project and to identify a barrier to meeting that outcome that the Plan ought to address.

- Jobs and employment opportunities for neighborhood residents. Lack of opportunity in the area. Access to transportation is a huge barrier.
- Improve access to food. Too many unhealthy food options in the neighborhood and not enough fresh produce.
- More youth activities and involvement is needed in the community. Organized sports leagues and/or activities in a safe, healthy environment.
- Residents feel there is a lack of hope in their community. The Plan needs to engage residents directly for buy in and to provide them with a sense that of hope and positive change.
- Lack of healthy food options is a challenge, but it is also a question of finding the right location on Maple Street for a small grocery store or purveyor.
- The area needs better quality rental housing. Maintenance of buildings are not well maintained, and strict code enforcement is urgently needed.

- A better utilized community center. The Napoleon Fielder Center does not feel like it not really open to the general public or to John Graham Homes (JGH) residents. Already a frequent collaborator with Restoration Rome but more could be beneficial. The Atlanta Hawks Foundation is another potential collaborator/resource for enhancement/expansion of programs.
- Affordable housing is needed in the neighborhood but also need market rate housing and retail spaces. If built, it can be a catalyst for other positive effects.
- Need to remove blighted housing which hurts the neighborhood's image and livability.
- Committed funding at the state and local level is a barrier.
- Opportunity to reuse the commercial or underutilized buildings on Maple Street.
- The Plan needs to create a 'sense of place'. Starts with improving streets and sidewalks. Art and murals can reinforce the neighborhood's identity.
- Transit is needed. The Plan could explore developing creative bus shelters to draw excitement.
- Removal of blight is a big concern in addition to creating a cleaner neighborhood. Maybe an opportunity to partner with Restoration Rome or another neighborhood organization. No trash cans on Maple Street only reinforces bad behavior.
- More businesses are needed and a incubator space could be an interesting idea.
- Funding, neighborhood buy-in, and political will is lacking in East Rome.
- Politics and lack of funding/personnel allows code enforcement to go ignored.
- Many properties in the neighborhood are vacant, boarded up and often owned by absentee landlords. Although some landlords are on a fixed income and not able to keep up with maintenance or code enforcement.
- Need to consider that properties outside the Project Area will also be impacted.
- Three organizations in the area are working on creating a community kitchen.
- Need to bring mixed income housing that does not displacement residents.
- Opportunity for infill development and housing throughout the neighborhood.
- Need to address stigma and negative perceptions of the community.
- Recreation spaces need to be improved to encourage play and improve the perception of the neighborhood.
- Opportunity to partner with new leadership at the recreation department.
- Transit/transportation remains a barrier for all aspects of life.
- Funding and political will is a barrier.
- The plan needs to be aligned with the upcoming city transportation plan. Right now, we do not know what the plan's recommendations will be pertaining to East Rome.
- Inclusive, education assistance is needed for the community.
- Some residents don't work traditional work hours and require 24-hour daycare
- Some residents may be fearful or skeptical of beautification efforts. May not feel improvements are intended for them.
- Need to have a safer neighborhood for residents to enjoy.

- Education to residents regarding planning efforts is critical and needed to foster a more active and engaged community.
- Resources and programs should be based off resident needs which requires proactive community involvement throughout the process.
- Churches used to serve as the main neighborhood leadership but no longer fill that role.
- ‘Broken Window Theory’ applies to East Rome which states that “visible signs of crime, anti-social behavior, and civil disorder create an urban environment that encourages further crime and disorder, including serious crimes”
- After the Pendelton Homes were created, crime in the immediate area drastically reduced
- Maintenance/long-term viability of physical improvements/programs need to be considered ahead of time.
- Need to develop incentives to attract developers and businesses to East Rome. Or create an environment ready for (re)investment.
- Opportunity to leverage the Technical School as a resource for residents to develop a career path.
- Would like to see more performance arts, music, and dance in the community.
- New construction needs to be combined with shifting ownership back to the community.
- If any services at John Graham Homes are phased out, they should be replaced with neighborhood-wide services.
- The Planning Team needs to remove their typical bureaucratic silos. The team needs to think and act more holistically as a whole, and needs to consider to not just make lives better for John Graham Home residents but to East Rome residents as well.
- Creative methods for community engagement are needed.
- Youth engagement is critical. They have a lot to offer and will directly benefit from the Plan’s implementation.
- Better quality housing, including market-rate housing, is needed. Housing Authority applicants are often under income or over income and it is very difficult to receive a housing voucher.
- Economics make bringing a grocery store to the neighborhood a challenge.