



## December 4, 2013 Meeting Highlights

**Attendees:** Todd Baylson, Morgan Hugo, Joel Johnson, Elise Mannella, Chuck Romick, Tahirih Smith, David Cohen, Aissia Richardson, Jim Hopkins, Joyce Smith, Theresa Ziegler (PPTF Members); Andy Sharpe, German Parodi, Justin Dula, Linda Richardson, Randy Smith, Emily Romick, Donald Knapik, Jill Feldstein (Guests); Candace Snyder, Jane Meconi, Karin Morris, Julia Strapp (Staff)

### Welcome and Meeting Overview

Jim Hopkins, PPTF Chair, welcomed members and guests to the PPTF meeting and reviewed meeting procedure. Mr. Hopkins announced that he presented to the DVRPC Board at their October 24, 2013 meeting as part of a larger presentation given by the Public Affairs Office on the PPTF. The presentation was well received and Mr. Hopkins noted that the DVRPC Board was very receptive to learning more about the PPTF.

### Presentations

#### **A Philadelphia Land Bank: An Approach to Addressing Vacant Property**

Jill Feldstein, Organizing and Advocacy Coordinator, Women's Community Revitalization Project, presented an overview and update of developing a Philadelphia land bank. A land bank is a public authority created to efficiently handle acquisition, maintenance, and sale of vacant properties. Land banks are a best practice that more than 75 municipalities have adopted, including Cleveland, Louisville, and Atlanta. Philadelphia would be the largest city in the United States to form a land bank. The development of a Philadelphia land bank followed statewide enabling legislation allowing municipalities in Pennsylvania to develop land banks.

Advocacy and development of the Philadelphia land bank legislation began in 2010. Ms. Feldstein noted that many different organizations have come together to advocate for the land bank, in that vacant and underused land impacts many fields, such as community development, economic development, and housing. The overall goal for a land bank is to create a fair, accountable, and transparent process to acquire and dispose of vacant properties. Currently vacant properties in Philadelphia are managed by different city agencies; a land bank would streamline the process. The land bank would also be a way for the city to acquire tax-delinquent properties near concentrations of city-owned land.

On October 28, the Public Property and Public Works Committee of Philadelphia City Council held a hearing on the Philadelphia land bank legislation. The Committee voted to give the bill a favorable recommendation. On December 4, City Council unanimously approved to amend the land bank bill by

naming the interim Land Bank Board, comprised of community representatives, and adding new provisions agreed upon by the bill's primary sponsors, Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez and Council President Darrell L. Clarke. The next step is for Mayor Michael Nutter to sign the bill, enacting the law.

Ms. Feldstein's handouts may be found at:

<http://www.dvrpc.org/ASP/committee/Presentations/PPTF/2013-12.pdf>.

### **The Urban Garden Initiative**

Aissia Richardson, PPTF member, is the President of the African American United Fund (AAUF), which raises funds to support the growth, development, and empowerment of the African American community, and in turn, society at large. The Urban Garden Initiative is a program of the AAUF and is responsible for the transformation of a vacant lot located at 2229 N. Broad Street in Philadelphia. Work began in 2009, with the following goals: create a clean and green open space, create new job opportunities and skills development, particularly in the green economy, promote environmental justice issues, and to develop a healthier, more informed community. A clean-up of illegally dumped waste on the site started the project. Initial stakeholders attended the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Garden Tenders program.

The development of this community garden was a way to foster community collaboration, offer an open space amenity, and support other programs in the community. Neighbors, young people, community members, and Temple University students have all participated in helping bring the garden to fruition and have worked at community clean ups and events. The garden has also become a community destination. Events such as farmer's markets, health fairs, and concerts are held in the space. An ongoing program spurred by the Urban Garden Initiative is Garden 2 Plate, a cooking and landscaping job skills development program with adjudicated minors. Classes are held weekly in July and August.

Ms. Richardson's presentation may be found at:

<http://www.dvrpc.org/ASP/committee/Presentations/PPTF/2013-12.pdf>.

### **Committee Business and Upcoming Outreach, Events, and News**

- At the January 2014 PPTF meeting, the PPTF Chair and Vice Chair will be named. Currently, Chair and Vice Chair are one-year positions. Anyone interested in volunteering for these positions should contact Jane Meconi.
- Moving into 2014, PPTF members will be taking a more active role in forming agendas for meetings. The meeting today was a great indication of how members can bring speakers and issues of interest to the PPTF. At the next meeting, David Cohen will be presenting on municipal infrastructure management issues. Agendas will be generated quarterly, if possible. Staff will be synthesizing responses received from the "puzzle piece" exercise this evening to ascertain PPTF direction over the next several months.
- Planning for the PPTF Regional Forum event will begin in earnest over the next couple of weeks. DVRPC staff will be looking to PPTF members to finalize topic and a speaker, venue, invite list of stakeholders, and to promote the event.
- Update of second PPTF membership round:
  - Eight members were selected from a pool of over 50 applications.

- Applications were received from all counties.
- With the addition of these new members, the PPTF will be comprised of 28 members.
- Orientation for these new members will occur in the coming weeks, and their first official meeting will be January 15, 2014.
- 2014 Federal Certification Public Participation Evaluation
  - DVRPC will be preparing for federal certification in the coming months. This review occurs every four years where our federal partners investigate DVRPC plans and programs. Public Participation/Title VI/EJ is one of the program areas.
  - DVRPC staff will prepare an outline of all activities in the Public Participation/Title VI/EJ program area from the last certification.
  - How to develop an evaluation process? There is scant information for evaluating public participation; it's mostly qualitative. How do other organizations evaluate? In the coming weeks, DVRPC staff will send resources, and DVRPC will be looking to the PPTF's expertise to help develop an evaluation criteria.
  - PPTF members will also be asked to provide input to the next iteration of *A Citizen's Guide to the Regional Planning Process*.

### One Minute Reports from PPTF Members

Task Force members were invited to provide updates on the activities of their organizations/municipalities/neighborhoods.

Tahirih Smith reported that another segment of the Lawrence-Hopewell trail opened earlier this fall in Mercer County. The trail is part of *The Circuit* program, of which DVRPC is a partner.

Morgan Hugo announced that she has taken a new position at Center for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (CARIE) as operations manager. She will be working on transportation issues for older adults. German Parodi, guest of Ms. Hugo, informed the group that PPA is currently releasing taxi medallions to increase the number of accessible taxis. There is currently a public comment period open regarding this issue, emails may be sent to [jney@Philapark.org](mailto:jney@Philapark.org).

Aissia Richardson announced that the 2014 Rail Users Network Conference will be held in Philadelphia in May 2014. The topic of the conference will be the Economic Value of Public Transit.

Todd Baylson noted that the Axis Philly website, [www.axisphilly.org](http://www.axisphilly.org) has done some great reporting regarding the Philadelphia land bank issue.

Chuck Romick attended an open house on the proposed Glassboro Line in Pitman, New Jersey.

Elise Mannella reported that Mercer County freeholders voted to allow a food waste recycling company to move forward with its plan to purchase an unused sludge plant on Duck Island and convert it into a recycling facility that will turn food waste into methane and fertilizer. Another company, AgriArk, is also developing a food recycling facility in Lawrence.

### Public Comments and Questions

There were no public comments or questions.