

**GRESHAM REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (GRDCAC)
June 09, 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting Held Remotely via Zoom

COMMITTEE PRESENT: Christopher Bentley, Vice Chair
Paul Drechsler
Ryan Johnson
Amelia Salvador, Chair
Dimitrios Zourkos

COMMITTEE ABSENT:

COMMISSION LIAISON PRESENT: Commission Vice President Eddy Morales

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Bower, Gresham Redevelopment Commission Executive Director
Amy Evans, Recording Secretary
Cecille Turley, Program Technician

GUEST SPEAKERS PRESENT: Elaine Howard, Elaine Howard Consulting, LLC

A. Call to Order

Chair Salvador called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

1. Announcements

Chair Salvador announced that committee member Helen Kidane, would no longer be participating in the GRDCAC.

2. Public Comment

None

3. Meeting Minutes: June 9, 2021

Motion was made by **Mr. Bentley** and seconded by **Mr. Drechsler TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JUNE 9, 2021**

The motion passed as follows:

BENTLEY	YES	JOHNSON	YES
DRECHSLER	YES	SALVADOR	YES
		ZOURKOS	YES

4. Future of Rockwood-West Gresham Urban Renewal Agency

Emily Bower, Gresham Redevelopment Commission (GRDC) Executive Director, introduced **Elaine Howard** of Elaine Howard Consulting, LLC. Together, **Ms. Bower** and **Ms. Howard** presented the PowerPoint presentation (PowerPoint attached as Exhibit A).

GRDCAC Discussion

Ms. Bower opened the floor for questions.

Mr Drechsler said, Do you have an idea of where you're leaning on that recommendation for the site?

Ms. Bower said, I think there's more information that we need to gather to determine what exactly the scenarios would look like. Once we have everything on the table, regarding the pros and cons of each option, it'll give us a better understanding of what are required to move forward. So right now I think there's sort of the lower hanging fruit of recommendations, and then there is the more complicated recommendations that would require. More public process, perhaps further conversation around what does the district look like, do the district boundaries remain, do they expand. That's a little bit of an exercise that we need to go through to really understand the impact of it. So I can't say that we have any particular recommendation that we would move forward. Elaine, based on her experience, may have some insight about the path of least resistance, perhaps, or will be providing some consulting through these scenarios.

Mr. Drechsler said, one piggyback on the last conversations we had: I think if we do look at expanding or continuing urban renewal I just I guess I'd like to encourage broader economic development support. We're highlighting some successes, but a lot of it was pretty project-specific. What is the development and the return on dollars, where many of those may be individuals that don't live in our Community? I think one of the things we hope from urban renewal is the stimulation of you know, private development and seeing permits and other things developing in the Community outside of the three buildings were putting up ourselves, right? And I know we shared that we didn't have the results, we were expecting to see. My hope would be if we continue in urban, rural new will conversations to be looking at that stimulation of those corridors in particular the major corridors where we have that have a lot of traffic and have a lot of commercial and other development opportunity. They are very underdeveloped. I would want to see some sort of stimulation of that if we look at any expansion. My hope again would be not to get 10 years of an urban renewal focused on one piece of property, but to have a lot of projects to celebrate, and then a lot of stimulation out of another urban renewal project. So that would be my two cents on that.

Ms. Bower said, thank you for that input. **Out of the grant programs that you've seen in the URA district that have focused on other components commercial corridors outside of just the rockwood triangle. Which of those do you think have had the most success in stimulating some of that development opportunity?**

Mr. Drechsler said, I think there was definitely some notice on the storefront improvement Program. The garage storefront as it's still open struggled on an you know, on finding it's you know it's you know direct impact, you know the Community as much, I think, still a valuable program but it struggles. I know a lot of existing businesses, you know use some of the storefront improvements, I think, or maybe an opportunity to find and focus on some of the

smaller properties that may be able to have a disparate impact on the area. Sometimes twenty \$30 million projects are exciting, but sometimes two \$5 million commercial property right on the corner can have a really big impact on the impression of the Community and the commercial you know viability of it so. And I think we have a lot of old infrastructure, we have a lot of post World War Two housing in that area, and a lot of our commercial districts are pretty tired up there and could use a lot of reimagining, so I think the storefront improvements idea has some big merit, I think, attracting more industry. So I like the sandy boulevard and some of those infrastructure improvements that really helped those industrial districts. I think that, obviously, should be part of it, but those strategic infrastructure improvements are nuanced so they won't be as visible, maybe, but will help make those industrial areas up there more viable. I know some of the railroad spurs and some of those other things up there are underutilized and have some opportunity, but personally I think that the Community, in particular, a facelift is what's going to have one of the biggest impacts. Also, beautification programs where we are, identifying the street with landscaping, really do have an impact

Ms. Bower said that's great. Thank you so much. The beautification program I think is a really interesting one, we just got a message from our past advisory committee Member Joan Albertson and her comment or recommendation was on wayfinding signage: banners or something to really help identify the district with unique characteristics. So, I think there's a you're on point there with some things that people are talking about. Thank you.

Mr. Drechlser said, also, working on again the actual mailing being Gresham and not portland would be a huge help to the area. Many businesses struggle to have an identity of Gresham when they tell all their customers they're Portland by their address. So, that continues to be a big struggle for the area.

Mr. Bentley said, I have a question. When you open up property for bid, do you open it up just widely and see who bites first? And then based on who actually shows interest, then you sort of sift through and you find the best the best bid? Or did the city look for specific interests or certain needs, and then they target specific organizations or companies that could provide for that need? Does that make sense?

- **Ms. Bower** said, it's done both ways. I think there has been historic practice in which folks may hold a developer forum and stimulate some developer interest in a particular site and have them provide a proposal for what they might see as a feasible project for that particular site. Oftentimes there is a limitation on the amount of connection between the Community needs and what the market is driving. So what we've done with the GRDC in the last iteration of Rockwood Rising was to have it driven through a Community engagement process, to really understand what the needs and the gaps and the hopes and dreams were for that area. Then, we would seek out the right partners that would fit the the proposal and would eventually identify a developer that had a similar vision or similar understanding around the types of uses for that particular site. So I think it can go either way depending on timing, or leadership. You know, is it is it a high visible project, being the Center of a community, which is how Rockwood Rising was really developed, it's not uncommon that property owners will solicit a proper site and ask for developer interest and then see what they come up with. So it can go both ways. Does that answer your question?

Mr. Bentley said, it does, yes. I think that if this was to be extended, I just sort of piggyback off of what Paul was talking about, I think that we need to think about future landowners and future developments and, and I mean obviously not ignore public interests and Community interest. But I think that, just having been a part of this this committee for almost a decade, I've seen us invest a lot into really worthwhile services that haven't returned any new tax space to replenish the URA. And I think that that's okay if we're interested in just fixing current issues, but I think that part the beauty of this sort of a financial instrument is that it can be a self perpetuating thing, where you invest into private enterprise that then returns more investment. And then you have more money to reinvest. So I would hope that, again, if this is extended that we focus a lot more on just private enterprise. Obviously, with that we have to be concerned about gentrification because we don't want to push out the existing residents or risk their rents or anything but I think there are ways of combating that without only providing for the services that are a part of a blighted community. I think that Rockwood has become sort of a great Center for lots of services for blighted communities, but if we want it to be something more than that, then we have to try some different tactics. But I but I realize, too, that hat if you're getting bids by those NGOs, it's sort of a catch 22, and you have to invest it somehow and there are these needs. So I'm just trying to understand: if there are bids for private enterprise that are being turned down because we're focused on providing services from NGOs, that would be different than if we're not getting any bids from private enterprise and all we're getting is NGOs. That is that I just want to make that really, really clear. And you're saying that it's sort of a little bit of both.

Ms. Bower said, it is, and I think it depends on guidance from our leadership, as well as you all on the committee, to think about you know what is the right balance and what I can share is that when we invest infrastructure capital improvement projects into a Community, the immediate fear is that property values go up. And so, when that happens we've seen across the region, gentrification takes hold of many communities of color that exacerbates the inability to stabilize and or be part of that economy anymore. And so I think Gresham has a real opportunity to think about how do we help do both. How do we infuse dollars into our capital improvement projects to create a better place that's vibrant it's better for business that has access to not just services, but to resources, opportunities, connections, to education connection, to workforce? But also it's a place people want to be, because it's beautiful, it has amenities that help make it feel like a Community Center. So I think that there's a lot of approaches to looking at how do you do increased assessed value and looking at it kind of in the short term versus the long term and then finding the middle ground in that. And I think we're Downtown Rockwood is really a good middle ground for understanding, you know how do we do both. There are still for-profit entities within that project that are sort of their anchor tenants that help provide some of that commercial activity on the ground floor and we have our third building that will be coming up that has that 27,000 square feet of ground for commercial retail as well. But then we also have the footprint of the innovation hub, that is largely nonprofits so there we've tried to balance that and I think the next conversation is how we create an environment in which people aren't being displaced from their homes are being able to afford their homes. I think housing

is huge, Paul mentioned that earlier. It is a significant need so what types of housing projects would help stabilize community members or residents within that area while the market starts to do its own natural increase. The private market will go where the investments are and so there's a real teeter totter of being able to get ahead of the curve before folks are coming in and purchasing large pieces of property and creating what we don't want to see. Which is challenges within the existing Community. Those are there today: no affordability. Gresham has done a really good job of securing existing mixed multifamily housing. Home Forward is in Rockwood, Human Solutions Rockwood CDC or Rockwood 10 with CDP. So that's a portion of it, so it is a fine balance of figuring out how to do this in a way that we're ensuring that we're doing anti displacement strategies, while building a really robust vibrant community. I think we can get there, with the help of leadership, with the help of you all. Maybe Elaine has some insights and she's been doing urban renewal all across the State. I know that this isn't a new concern about how do you balance these needs. Elaine do you have to offer any insight on some of the work that you've done around this?

Ms. Howard said, **No that's it's a great question and you're right all communities are struggling with housing issues right now** and to probably your surprise some communities are struggling just to get housing built. Some processes in St. Johns and Madras can't even get it built. Well, other communities are struggling with the gentrification. I'm working right now with a colleague neighborhood in Portland whose main concern is trying to prevent displacement and trying to provide programs to further ownership of their current residence--both homeownership and business ownership. So we're working with them to talk about how to stabilize a neighborhood, and I as Emily says it's very tricky because as it things start improving, people desire that neighborhood more and prices go up. So unless you can figure out some way to land big properties or have them under some ownership control that limits rent increases or those types of things that control that market force, it's really hard to counterbalance gentrification with improvement.

Chair Salvador said, Right, so you know where we're at right now with the current times. The cost of construction has just tremendously increased. The cost of materials and supplies has tremendously increased within our industry, and so we are seeing that as being a deterrent, right now, as far as developers and further development of housing in all sectors, whether it be single family dwelling and or multifamily. The developers won't touch it right now, because the market is very unstable and with that being said, the interest rates are predicted to go up. So that will add another challenge to the housing market where rent is just going to inherently increase due to those two factors of construction and of interest rates. So the cost of living in Oregon right now is tremendous compared to the national level with other states and other regions of the of the nation. So, we are facing a difficult time right now in Oregon as far as increasing more housing and so to be able to find that that balance we need to be able to have our industry in our market, we need a break, we need a break from all these increases and costs and that's the only way that we're going to be able to build more inventory and i'm coming from the real estate perspective, from a broker perspective, as far as

the residential side. And then, as far as the commercial side to be able to prosper and to increase more of the desirable amenities that we want in our Community, I believe that we have to work with the private sector and the private property owners and businesses to be able to attract and make Rockwood more of an attractive place to do business. So that is going to be a lot of work with cooperating and doing some collaborative work with the brokers and the property owners. So that's that's going to take some creative planning to be able to get all the amenities that we want to bring into our Community. So again, I think it's just a collaboration of all the work we need to do with the private sector. I know I used to work with Prosper Portland then it used to be the PTC, which is the Portland Development Commission prior to rebranding. We started neighborhood prosperity initiatives which was really helpful. We had six neighborhoods that were project neighborhoods, Cully was one of them, Parkrose was one of them, and we had them throughout the whole East county area where we had adopted and worked with the development Commission to be able to rebrand like the signage and the banners within the communities to identify each sector of the Communities. And so we had established this NPI group of six different neighborhoods where we work collaboratively with the neighborhood associations and the Community members so again, I think it's a combination of community member-driven, as well as business and private sector-driven to be able to accomplish everything we want to in the URA area. So again, we cannot help the current status of where the market is for development. It's very difficult right now. So until we can see a turnaround and some type of supply chain or economy we have to just come to expect it's going to be very difficult to build more inventory at this point.

Mr. Drechsler said, we are in a region that has done a tremendous amount of policies on Anti displacement. We have a lot of rent caps, imitations, and tenant rights. We have a lot of support infrastructure in the Rockwood area with Human Solutions and others that are focused on displacement and stabilization and doing that. So while I don't disagree to ignore it completely, it's hard for a program that is designed about incremental tax increase and revitalization of a community to also be in the same breath same we don't want to raise property taxes and we don't want to make it too much. The facts are Rockwood is a regional community is one of the poorest reputation and has the biggest opportunities in the region. And putting it in the same breath as the North Portland or other stuff well, maybe has a historical displacement conversation Rockwood has a long way to go to be you know in that level of development and desirability and you know and fighting on that same breath, you know. It's got a lot of industrial job opportunity and it's got a lot of other things, so I again I don't think we want to lose sight of caring about the community and all the residents and trying to uplift it, but I think this tool in particular is also going to impact, a great number of residents and give them opportunities to develop their properties with hopefully increased values and increased revenue. So it is uplifting the Community in a lot of ways, and there are a lot of forces and a lot of laws that have been placed. And i'm a landlord and have built properties. And I can tell you this is one of the toughest communities that is very tenant friendly. A lot of displacement stuff has come in place in the last you know four or five years. So i'm not saying we should disregard it, but I don't think that it's being ignored. I think that it's

been a major topic of our region and a lot of things have been put in place to help with displacement. And I think the biggest opportunity of era is to really develop the Community and help it get the amenities. We want every resident to have parks and shops and quality places to live and all of that, regardless of income, you know, everybody deserves to have those amenities. And part of that is stimulating private money and other things because you can't borrow and build it all. So I think that its highest and best you know objective is to prioritize doing that because it is that incremental tax revenue by the new developments that are going to come in that help bring the money back in and provide those other amenities and Community things. So I hear you and I don't want to disregard what you're saying I think displacement and you know all of that is real but this is one of the only forces in the Rockwood area that will be helping renovate and build that in its biggest opportunity. And so I just want to acknowledge that there are a lot of other forces that are focused on the other elements of this. So I think partnering and helping those resources be prevalent and real while we put all the gas we can toreally develop that community with these dollars, I think, is the best opportunity here.

Ms. Bower said, that's great and thank you for all the very good comments. **once we have kind of a direction for the future** or termination of the district, much of this will fold into new grants and loan programs. I think next month as we start to keep in mind some of these conversations, what projects do we want to prioritize if we were to do them in the short term, and what would it look like if we were to have the extension would really help us focus in on how we're promoting and/or looking at support from the larger Community. So very much appreciate all the comments and feel like when we get to that kind of project list and hearing what you're saying, I definitely agree that there are opportunities to help businesses on the ground to really support that private sector market. It shouldn't be so hyper focused on just a site, but really thinking about holistically the district, and in the industrial sector there's some redevelopment opportunities that have been talking with active folks about as well, so more to come. We really want to continue this conversation, as we look at those projects and using this this lens from the committee and leadership to help prioritize what those projects would be. If we do an extension, those will be at the forefront of the ask. If this is how much money we're going to be requesting or offering, what are we going to be spending it on? And and you all will be part of that conversation.

4. Good of the Order

B. Adjournment of meeting

Hearing no further business, **Chair Salvador** adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

AMELIA SALVADOR
CHAIR

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Evans
Recording Secretary