

Superfund Community Visioning Workshop

Bojon Town/Eiler Heights – Bessemer – The Grove

**Sponsored By:
Superfund Community Vitalization Project
City of Pueblo**

February 20, 2016

SUMMARY

Thank you everyone for making the Superfund Community Visioning Workshop a great success. When the Superfund Community Vitalization Project Workgroup proposed the idea of a community visioning workshop there were two goals established for this event. The primary goal was to get as much resident input as possible to present to the EPA Superfund Redevelopment Initiative for inclusion in their visioning workshop scheduled later this year. The second goal was to get more resident participation and awareness in the Superfund process. This workshop succeeded in accomplishing both of these goals.

The Superfund Community Visioning Workshop was held Saturday February 20th at NeighborWorks of Pueblo and was facilitated by Dawn DiPrince, Executive Director of the El Pueblo Museum. As a co-sponsor, The City of Pueblo made this event possible by helping fund the event. Marketing for the event included a variety of tools. There were 1900 postcards mailed to the residents and homeowners in the “preliminary study area” of the Colorado Smelter Superfund Site. In addition, flyers were distributed door-to-door to all of the homes in the area through volunteers from the Eiler Heights Neighborhood Association in Old Bojon Town. The Superfund Community Involvement Workgroup also contacted and distributed posters to the businesses in the study area. NeighborWorks volunteered their time stamping and mailing the postcards. KIQ’N Country 103.3 provided a live interview and approximately 20 community service radio spots. The Pueblo Chieftain covered our event with both a before and after article. The event flyer was posted on the City Community Board. KRDO News Channel 13 posted an announcement on their web site along with a community service announcement and did a follow up news story about the success of the event. KOAA News Channel 5 did a follow up news story about the event as well.

There were 40 attendees from the Bojon Town/Eiler Heights and Bessemer neighborhoods. This group included residents, landlords and business owners and was culturally very diverse.

The format for the workshop was based upon having small groups discuss 3 different questions to generate resident input. There were 4 butcher paper covered tables of 10 people each. The paper allowed participants to jot down ideas for discussion. Before the first question was posed a scribe or secretary was appointed for each table. Their responsibility was to record a synopsis of the ideas generated. After each question was discussed the participants moved to another table but were required to shuffle themselves so that the make-up of each table was different for each of the three questions. This promoted a variability of views in answering each question. The scribe for each table, however, remained with their initial table maximizing the discussion time.

The three questions posed were:

Question #1 - What makes these neighborhoods essential? What do our neighborhoods have now that make them great?

Question #2 - Imagine that the sky is the limit and money is available. What can you envision for your neighborhood? Think about your five senses: Sound, Smell, Taste, Feel, Sight. What emotions does your neighborhood invoke?

Question #3 - What steps are needed to take us from where we are to where we want to be?

The final step in the process had each of the attendees place what they felt were the most important ideas from the days' discussions and put them on "sticky notes" on a summary board. This provided a glimpse into what topics the attendees felt were top priority.

In this document, you will find a summary of responses and ideas gathered from participants. Following that, there is an appendix that details all of the written responses.

Some of our personal observations to the event are:

- The attendees were excited about having a venue in which they felt their voices would be heard.
- Responses were from all participants at each table and not controlled by only a few.
- In general, it was obvious how proud people are of their neighborhoods yet recognize that problems do exist.
- Participants want action to be taken to keep their neighborhoods vital.
- Participants have a strong sense of community and the history of their neighborhoods.
- Participants understand that the issues presented will not be resolved by volunteerism alone.
- Everyone seemed to enjoy the process.
- Dawn DiPrince's leadership and methods made it easy for everyone to express their ideas and turn these ideas into viable, usable data.
- A very clear vision for these neighborhoods came out of this process.

In conclusion, let's not let the "vision" that became clear during this workshop gather dust on some shelf. This information needs to be incorporated, along with the Superfund Redevelopment Initiatives Visioning Workshop data, into a comprehensive action plan that is implemented.

Thank you again to everyone that participated in all aspects of this Superfund Community Visioning Workshop.

Joe and Pam Kocman
Members of the Superfund Community Vitalization Project

Facilitator's Observations

The visioning workshop organized by community residents was designed to glean authentic and inclusive input from the people who live in the neighborhoods impacted by Superfund-related testing and designation. Neighborhood residents worked closely with a number of agencies and media outlets to ensure that people were aware of and invited to this important discussion. Attendance at the workshop was diverse and many participants met new faces who shared their concerns about the future of their neighborhoods.

Residents expressed deep pride in their neighborhoods, but also a feeling of helplessness in maintaining the tangible and intangible elements that have made their neighborhoods wonderful places to live. When asked what they most want to see for their neighborhoods – if money was no object, it was remarkable and touching that what participants most wanted was connection and community. Residents overwhelmingly expressed a desire to be more connected in a human way within their neighborhoods. They talked about the ideal of neighbors looking out for each other, elders being able to age within their homes, kids being safe to play within the neighborhood and develop lifelong friendships, neighbors working together to keep the alleys and homes clean and safe, people being able to safely walk through the neighborhood to access local businesses, etc. They spoke of a need for a cohesive community where neighbors chat across the fence, families know each other, and residents have a sense of comfort and responsibility because they belong to the neighborhood. Residents outlined some infrastructure improvements that could support the community in their desire to be cohesive and connected.

They also expressed a need to feel more connected to the larger community. One of the most popular visions discussed at the meeting was a way to connect these neighborhoods to the City Center and the Riverwalk District. Despite the relative proximity to development at the Riverwalk, the neighborhoods are isolated by industrial elements and lack of safe walkable/bikable spaces. They would like to seek ways that neighborhood connectivity might overlap with current projects: levee construction by the Southeast Water Conservancy District, realignment of I-25, re-development of the Alpha-Beta building, and RTA-related development. They are proud of the ongoing work in the City Center, but they would like to advocate for planning that has the foresight to connect – rather than further isolate – these neighborhoods.

In this greater theme of connection, participants want more opportunity to be a part of the work and planning that is done in their neighborhoods. Residents want a greater voice in an authentic community planning process. Most importantly, they want to ensure that any development and/or environmental clean-up does not destroy the community within these historic neighborhoods.

Dawn DiPrince
Community Facilitator
Director of Community Museums, History Colorado

Summary of Notes by Question

During the visioning workshop, participants gathered in small groups and addressed three different questions. This is a summary of answers to these three different questions, as recorded by each table's reporter/recorder.

Question #1

What makes these neighborhoods essential? What do our neighborhoods have now that make them great?

Pride in Neighborhood

- Multiple generations still in family home
- Neighbors look out for each other
- People want to become part of Neighborhood
- Neighborly
- Bond with area/community – cohesive
- Walkability – get to know neighbors
- Neighborhood awareness
- Ownership- not just land/homes but rather love of neighborhood and therefore care about what happens there
- Intergenerational relationships
- Community get-togethers
- Neighbors get along and interact – visit across the fence
- Children play with each other so they have playmates
- Feeling of belonging
- Longevity of tenants/owners
- Hardworking people

History of Neighborhoods

- Each neighborhood has character and history
- Melting pot – Italians, Bojons, Mexican Americans
- Traditions
 - Bojon – Ziggen (Easter blessing of the food). Okolitzta Tamburitzan Musical Group, Bojon Town Frolic
 - Mexican American – Grupo Folklorico, mariachi music, food and restaurants
- Mixing bowl of cultures
- Heritage variety of nationalities
- Snapshot of the past
- Architectural History
- Uniqueness
- Churches
- Quaint buildings with character
- Long term history
- People diverse

Centralized Location

- Ease of access
- Convenient
- Vital arteries and routes
- Centrally located
- Close access to restaurants
- Easy access to
 - Churches
 - Hospitals
 - Schools
 - Recreation – Fishing
 - Walking trails
 - Runyon Field

Housing and Neighborhoods Perceptions

- Affordable
- Stability
- Trees
- Low crime
- Neighborhood Watch
- Too many rentals
- Neighborhood to raise families
- Great parks – Bessemer, Benedict (needs face lift), Bessemer school park

Businesses

- Restaurants, Bars, Bakeries
 - Most are destination businesses whereby people come to businesses because of the history and know what to expect from experience
- Orman to I-25 business district
- Evraz Steel

Question #2

Imagine that the sky is the limit and money is available. What can you envision for your neighborhood? Think about your five senses: Sound, Smell, Taste, Feel, Sight. What emotions does your neighborhood invoke?

Housing

- Remove dilapidated homes – use vacant space for parking spaces
- Limit rentals
- Help the elderly keep houses in good condition
- Rebuild homes
- Upgrade housing
- Remove tilting garages
- Background checks for rentals

- Develop incentives for people to move into neighborhood
- Help renters become homeowners
- Reuse of vacant properties
- Increased property values
- Responsible landlords and revival of owner occupied homes
- Age in Place – Renovate homes so people can stay in their homes for life
- Refurbish homes to attract potential homeowners
- Services so people are able to remain in their homes as they age

Business

- More restaurants
- Grocery store/mini mart/fresh produce market
- Refurbish older buildings to attract new businesses
- Urban farming = jobs and local fresh food access for all
- Enhance businesses – Health Center

- **Beautification**
- Park like atmosphere – small seating areas
- Yard clean-ups
- Fresh paint on houses
- Decorative lights and signs
- More trees and update parks
- No litter
- Landscaping/trees
- No yard parking
- Clean up overgrowth of weeds, brush and trees
- Neighborhood art
- Landscaping/ tree – flower boxes on 4 corners of Mesa and Santa Fe
- Decorative sound wall along Northern east of I-25
- Individual designed signage and lighting for each of the 3 neighborhoods
- Strong Code Enforcement
- Bessemer and Bojon town cleanups
- Improve streets, lighting, curbs and utilities for beautification
- Maintain streets

Safety, Services, and Quiet Living Environment

- Sound barrier along Evraz
- Recreational opportunities
- Safe streets
- Eradicate criminal activities
- Gang Free Zone
- Children playing safely
- Keep transient population low
- Bus shelters
- Full sidewalks
- Quiet streets

- More police presence with faster response
- Build relationship with community members
- Newsletter/method of communicating
- Neighborhood Watch/pride
- Re-route semis from Northern east to Santa Fe Drive
- Improved streets
- More youth involvement – Recreation/Community Center/Performing Stage
- Community gardens – growing food all year – Co-op
- Grade alleys
- Outdoor gathering places
- Quality schools
- Walkability and biking access
- Green spaces
- Better parks and recreation opportunities
- Community center and music venues for local bands

History, Heritage and Neighborhood

- South Gateway to the Riverwalk – Northern through Bessemer to S. Santa Fe through Bojon Town and continuing south through The Grove to the Riverwalk
- Build on the idea of “Pedestrian Density”. Residents want an authentic experience in their neighborhoods. They want to be part of a “Neighborhood”...to be able to walk to parks, shops, restaurants, churches, etc.
- History Museum for each neighborhood or a centrally located museum detailing the history of all three neighborhoods
- Old Trolley Line
- Bike / walking trail to Riverwalk
- A trail through neighborhoods with historical signage
- Frontage road from I-25 along steel mill property with a flyover to Santa Fe Drive eliminating the hill. This would make Northern Ave. east of I-25 like a side street for safe and quiet neighborhood access.
- South Gateway to the Riverwalk through Bessemer, Bojon Town, and The Grove to the Riverwalk
- Themed based events - unique cultures
- Neighborhood celebrations
- Heritage Tours – keep history alive

Question #3

What steps are needed to take us from where we are to where we want to be?

- Engage schools (High School and Colleges), students for community involvement
- Construction Degree program to work in community
- Pueblo Youth Service
- Use existing programs to work in community
- Build sound walls for noise and beautification on Northern East of I-25 Overpass by Evraz
- District 60 Students - Mandatory community service
- Community Gardens - Raised beds

- Contact and work with CDOT, City Council, Federal and State Elected Representatives
- Hire a Plan Director to move Vision forward
- Tax Incentives for Code Enforcement
- \$25 fine for prisoners that would be used for more police presence in parks and neighborhoods
- Contact EPA and Superfund Redevelopment Initiative
- State and Local Historical Societies
- History Colorado
- Zoning and Planning
- Volunteers from schools (High School and Colleges)
- Create a Marketing Plan
- Write Grants
- Contact Businesses for help
- Department of Local Affairs - Lee - DOLA
- University Architectural Students
- Residents and Business Owners should each get a copy of the Marketing Plan
- All agencies and elected officials should receive a copy of the Marketing Plan
- Paid Position to move plan forward - stay the course. Plan will die without this.
- DOLA Funding
- Establish short term goals
- Identify common concerns
- Get City Council behind us to get things done
- Incentives for homeowners who take care of properties
- Education flier from Code Enforcement to help homeowners and tenants understand what is expected
- Community service programs to help in clean ups
- Welcome to new neighbors
- Recruit and promote volunteers

Most Important Action Steps Defined by Participants

For the last step in the visioning workshop, participants wrote down the actions that they deemed the most important for the future of the neighborhoods.

BEAUTIFICATION

- Clean up alleys and yards
- Utilize code enforcement and establish new regulations
- Instill homeowner pride through personal responsibility
- Make landlords personally responsible
- Increase owner occupied housing
- Add street lighting street scraping and art, perhaps individualize for each neighborhood
- Signage for each neighborhood
- Implement a beautification committee
- Deal with abandoned homes
- Remove all the tree and brush overgrowth from yards and slag/truck area
- Promote yard landscaping for beautification and health reasons

GREEN GARDENS, PARKS, and TREES

- Promote homeowner gardening
- Fund community gardens, green spaces, outdoor gathering spaces
- Reforest with new trees
- Utilize phyto-remediation to clean soils

RIVERWALK CONNECTION

- South Gateway Riverwalk corridor connecting neighborhoods to the Riverwalk
- Trails/Walkways connecting neighborhoods, i.e. "String of Pearls" from CDOT plans

STREETS, LIGHTING and SAFETY

- New sidewalks to improve walking safety
- Widen Northern Ave east of the bridge
- Perhaps make a frontage road with overpass to connect with Santa Fe Dr.
- Roto-mill the streets then replace with new asphalt
- Provide kid safe zones
- Add "Big Brother Cameras" in alleys to reduce crime elements

BUSINESS

- Mini mart / fresh produce market in neighborhood
- Promote destination businesses
- Promote urban farming business creating jobs and promoting education

PLAN

- Establish neighborhood plans
- Make implementation a priority, not just talk about it
- Fund a paid position to make certain plan is implemented and stays on course
- Perhaps in-neighborhood housing is part of the pay package so individual lives the plan

CITY COUNCIL and POLITICAL POWER

- Greater commitment and backing from City Council
- More City Council involvement
- Collect political powers from all levels
- Greater commitment from all levels of government to help solve problems

HISTORY, HERITAGE, CULTURAL COMMUNITY

- Utilize all the cultural heritages to promote the neighborhoods, both external and internal
- Community Info Center with Museum
- History Trail through neighborhoods
- Concentrate on using the existing historical stories and expand them
- Venue with performance stage

COMMUNITY and PARTNERSHIPS

- Invite community service groups to help with blight issues
- Find community leaders from each block
- Promote more resident and community leaders get involved
- Connect colleges and high schools into community projects for revitalization
- Involve religious leaders
- Utilize or develop a college curriculum to implement Vitalization
- Board of Water Works for assistance to improve landscaping

INCENTIVES

- Reward success
- Home and business improvements
- Attending meetings

FUNDING

- Grants to create new spaces or clean-up existing areas in Superfund site
- Grants for projects and leaders to do them
- Evraz funding
- PURA DISTRICT
- Presidents Under Graduate Research Awards-Undergraduate awards to fund student research in some topic
- Use pot tax to fund
- BLB Financial Solutions - Grant Development-Research funding sources

COMMUNICATION

- Advertising and marketing
- Get Started-Newspaper, TV, Radio

EPA

- Dispel the fear the designation invokes
- Support EPA by giving permission to test to speed process along
- Finalize I-25 plans so we can move forward
- Finalize testing results to banks will lend money for loans and refinancing

Appendix

- Appendix A: List of notes at each table

Appendix A: List of Notes at Each Table

Question #1

What makes these neighborhoods essential? What do our neighborhoods have now that make them great?

Question #1 – Table 1

- Pride in neighborhood
- Evraz Steel Mill
- Neighborhood Watch
- Community get togethers

Question #1 – Table 2

- People/Diverse - Neighbors get along
- Industry - Evraz
- History of neighborhood
- Stability of neighborhood
- Architecture
- Churches
- Bars
- Restaurants/Food
- Bakeries
- Location-Centrally
- Hospital
- Trees
- Affordable
- Gangs
- Recreation - Fishing
- Schools
- Walking Trails
- Sports Complex - Runyon Field
- Low Crime

Question #1 – Table 3

- Character and History
- Multiple generations still in family home
- Traditions: Ziggen, Okolitza Tamburitzans, Bojon Town Frolic
- Architectural History
- Melting Pot - Italians, Bojons, Mexican Americans, etc.
- Orman to I-25 Business District
- Quaint buildings with character
- Neighbors look out for each other
- Great Park/Bessemer - Benedict needs face life
- Great Restaurants
- Berwind and other streets - Rental Property - Longevity of Tenants - Raise Families

- People want to become a part of the neighborhood
- Neighborhood Pride
- Evraz and other businesses

Question #1 – Table 4

- Neighborly
- Long term families
- Uniqueness
- History
- Mixing bowl of cultures
- Pride of neighborhood
- Vital arteries (routes)
- Affordable home ownership
- Close access to restaurants
- Bond with area(community) - Cohesive
- Destination restaurants - Chose to go there because they know what to expect
- Walkability - get to know neighbors
- Ownership - not just of owning land/homes but rather love of neighborhood and therefore care about what happens there.
- Heritage - variety of nationalities, areas not littered, long term history, St.Mary's Church, convenience and ease of access, interaction of neighbors, children play with others so they have playmates, feeling of belonging
- Neighborhood awareness
- Trees
- Hardworking people
- Centralized location - Ease of access
- Historic Architecture
- Snapshot of past
- Inter-generational relationships

Question #2

Imagine that the sky is the limit and money is available. What can you envision for your neighborhood? Think about your five senses: Sound, Smell, Taste, Feel, Sight. What emotions does your neighborhood invoke?

Question #2 – Table #1

- Sound Barrier along Evraz
- Recreational opportunities
- Safe Streets
- Park like atmosphere – small seating areas
- More Restaurants
- Remove dilapidated Homes – use vacant space for parking spots
- Yard Clean-ups
- Limit Rentals
- Need Volunteers

- Eradicate criminal activities
- Gang Free Zone
- Enhanced Businesses
- Fresh paint on houses
- Decorative lights and signs
- More trees and updated park
- No litter
- Children playing safely
- Maintain streets
- Help the elderly keep houses in good condition
- Keep transient population low

Question #2 – Table #2

- Rebuilt Homes
- Upgrade Housing
- Remove tilting garages
- Landscaping/trees
- Full Sidewalks
- No yard parking
- Bus Shelters
- Clean up Overgrowth of weeds and brush
- Quiet Street
- More police presence with faster response
- Build relationship with community members
- Newsletter/method of communicating
- Neighborhood Watch/pride
- Background/Rentals
- Re-Route semis from Northern East to Santa Fe Drive
- Welcome new neighbors
- Develop new incentives for people to move into neighborhoods

Question #2 – Table #3

- South Gateway to the Riverwalk - Northern Ave. East through Bessemer to S. Santa Fe Ave. South through Bojon Town and continuing South through the Grove to the Riverwalk
- Build on the idea of "Pedestrian Density." Residents want an authentic experience in their neighborhoods. They want to be a part of a "Neighborhood" ...to be able to walk to parks, shops, restaurants, churches, etc.
- History Museums for each neighborhood or a centrally located museum detailing the history of all three neighborhoods
- Old Trolley Line
- Bike/Walking Trail to Riverwalk
- Neighborhood Art
- Grocery Store
- Improved Streets
- Landscaping/Trees-Flower boxes on 4 corners of Mesa and S. Santa Fe Ave.
- Decorative sound wall along Northern from I-25 East

- Individually designed signage for each of the three neighborhoods
- Individually designed lighting for each of the three neighborhoods
- More Youth involvement - Recreation /Community Center/Performing Stage
- Community Gardens - Growing food all year - Co-op
- Stronger Code Enforcement - Incentives for those homeowners who take care of their properties
- Education Flier from Code Enforcement to help homeowners and tenants understand what is expected.
- Grade alleys
- Keep older buildings and refurbish to use to attract new businesses and potential homeowners
- Help renters become homeowners
- Bessemer and Bojon Town clean-ups have code enforcement educate neighborhoods
- More police presence
- Frontage Road from I-25 East on Steel Mill property which would parallel Northern Ave. with a sound wall between the frontage road and Northern Ave. Northern Ave. would become just like a side street
- Build a flyover from East Northern Ave. to Santa Fe Drive that would eliminate the hill.

Question #2 – Table #4

- South Gateway through Bessemer (Northern Ave.), down S. Santa Fe Ave. through Bojon Town and the Grove to the Riverwalk.
- Northern Ave. and Santa Fe are vital streets to Pueblo
- Beautification of Bessemer, Bojon Town and the Grove - Streets, lighting, curbs, utilities
- Themed events...unique culture/s based
- Neighborhood celebrations
- Outdoor gathering spaces
- Quality schools
- Reuse of vacant properties, new businesses - xeriscaping
- Urban farming = jobs. Local fresh food access for all
- Walk ability and biking access
- Community gardening
- Green spaces
- Heritage tours - Keep history alive
- Better parks and recreation opportunities
- Increased property values
- Increased police presence
- Community center and music venues for local bands
- Beautification, community service programs to help clean-up
- Services so people are able to remain in their homes as they age
- Responsible landlords and revival of owner-occupied homes
- Age in Place - Renovate homes so people can stay in their homes
- Health Center

Question #3

What steps are needed to take us from where we are to where we want to be?

Question #3 – Table #1

- Engage schools (High School and Colleges), students for community involvement
- Construction Degree program to work in community
- Pueblo Youth Service
- Use existing programs to work in community
- Build sound walls for noise and beautification on Northern East of I-25 Overpass by Evraz
- District 60 Students - Mandatory community service
- Community Gardens - Raised beds

Question #3 – Table #2

- Contact and work with CDOT, City Council, Federal and State Elected Representatives
- Hire a Plan Director to move Vision forward
- Tax Incentives for Code Enforcement
- \$25 fine for prisoners that would be used for more police presence in parks and neighborhoods
- Contact EPA and Superfund Redevelopment Initiative
- State and Local Historical Societies
- History Colorado
- Zoning and Planning
- Volunteers from schools (High School and Colleges)
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- Contact Businesses for help
- Department of Local Affairs - Lee - DOLA
- University Architectural Students
- Residents and Business Owners should each get a copy of the Marketing Plan
- All agencies and elected officials should receive a copy of the Marketing Plan

Question #3 – Table #3

- Paid Position to move plan forward - stay the course. Plan will die without this.
- DOLA Funding
- Establish short term goals
- Identify common concerns
- Get City Council behind us to get things done

Question #3 – Table #4

No thoughts written down