Restore Rundberg January 28, 2016 community meeting minutes

The meeting took place at Guerrero-Thompson Elementary School, 102 E Rundberg Lane.

*Call to order: 7:08pm*

**Attendees:**Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team: Erica Saenz, Roberto Perez, Randy Teich, Ann Teich, Ming Chu, Jo-Kathryn Quinn, Monica Guzmán, Aida Cerda-Prazak

Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team applicants: Michelle Fleming, David Fairchild, Rachel Pry

Austin Police Department: Kyran Fitzgerald, SPO Tuhwan Kim, SPO Ray Kianes, SPO Adam Soliz, Lt. Kevin Leverenz, SPO Frank Wilson, SPO Cecil Jones, Sgt. Keith Bazzle, SPO Jacob Ballesteros, SPO Paul Basulto

Austin Voices for Education and the Youth: new Lanier HS Family Resource Center Director and Community School Coordinator Jocelyn Connell

Council on At-Risk Youth: Lanier HS youth advisor Melissa Axton

Amerigroup: Austin Health Plan Community Relations Representative Roger de Leon

Latino HealthCare Forum: Chief Strategy Officer Chelsea Brass

Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid: lawyer Robert Doggett

**Public comment**

Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid: lawyer Robert Doggett gave an update on the **North Lamar Home Park** residents who hired him to sue their new owner, denouncing unreasonable increases in rents among other issues (see August 2015 community meeting minutes). The attorney said he would be dropping the suit in the next 24h on behalf of the newly formed North Lamar residents association because the owner of the property manifested interest in selling the land to the residents.
Robert Doggett also mentioned a new client organization that was recently started in the area. “I am not allowed by my client to release more information, but I will continue to be active in the area,” informed the lawyer.

Roger de Leon, a Community Relations Representative for **Amerigroup**, an health insurance provider covering beneficiaries of public programs like Medicare or Medicaid, explained that he attended the meeting because his employer has “tons” of members in the area, is very present in the neighborhood, where it’s got numerous partners, and is interested in sponsoring events, as well as providing health education classes.

* **Rundberg Educational Advancement District update**

Rundberg Educational Advancement District (READ) Communication Committee co-leader Ray Kianes (an Austin Police officer working on the neighborhood revitalization initiative as a Region 2 District Representative for the Rundberg area) introduced his update by reminding the fact that, with its six schools, the 1.5 mile stretch of Rundberg Lane going from North Lamar Boulevard to Cameron Road looked like a campus. One of the goals of the READ group is to make the schools and important youth of the area more visible. The group is therefore excited to be receiving its first donation to the group’s **T-shirts** project from Frost Bank on March 3rd, when the bank inaugurates its new Anderson Lane financial center. The first Rundberg Educational Advancement District T-shirts will be used for a community march to take place on March 26 from the different READ schools to the Gus Garcia Rec Center, as part of a community **spring festival**, and READ hopes this will be the first of a series of donations.

Another way READ will make the area youth more visible is with its **trash cans** project that will beautify Rundberg Lane by limiting the amount of trash ending up on the sidewalks, and with the involvement of Rundberg Rising artists that will help the schools decorate the trash cans. The goal is that READ schools will take ownership of the street.

In response to Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team chair Erica Saenz question on partnerships, officer Kianes indicated this project of the READ Beautification Committee comes after a Rundberg students council that many community members helped lead identified beautification as a priority, and is with Keep Austin Beautiful’s participation.

Officer Kianes concluded his intervention by reminding the participants that READ monthly meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month.

* **Community Health Improvement Plan presentation**

Latino HealthCare Forum (or LHCF) Chief Strategy Officer Chelsea Brass, responsible for the organization’s **Rundberg Health and Wellness Initiative**, announced that City Council just founded the elaboration of the Community Health Improvement Plan (or CHIP) that represents the second phase of the initiative, started by a Community Health Assessment (or CHA), conducted in 2014-2015 thanks to the City and funding from St David’s Foundation.

From his **Community Health Assessment** that took almost a year talking to stakeholders, looking at data from past years, etc., it results that the top health issues in the Rundberg area are heart diseases, diabetes, mental health issues, and substance abuse, whereas the main barriers to health services identified are access to the services, language and cultural barriers.

LHCF was able to conduct focus groups with people that spoke only one language like Spanish or Arabic, and found those patients had no way to describe what their were experiencing to the doctors when in pain, or describe their children’s condition, nor ask for the foods they need in stores, for example. The goals of LHCF with the elaboration of a CHIP are to develop a directory of services through community based technology development and help the public access them through community health workers that would help navigate it. The technology would be multilingual, and the health workers bilingual in different languages. Priority languages are Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, Burmese, and Nepali.

**Community health workers** are defined as “frontline public health workers who are trusted members or have an unusually close understanding of the community served.” By providing peer support, they can overcome cultural barriers. A 250-hour, state-approved training for those hired by LHCF to carry out this CHIP will be offered from next month at Hart Elementary School.

Latino HealthCare Forum Chief Technology Officer Hector Torres explained that the “Hackathon” held in October 2015 to identify solutions that could address barriers detailed in Community Health Assessment enabled community members to select an app developer that will work on a **Community Resource Directory** available in several languages and including voice synthesis, as well as a speech-to-text feature.

**Issue-specific workgroups** will be formed in February by identified barrier and by condition. All groups will convene in March in order to review the Community Health Assessment before holding monthly meetings to engage and update members, and finally present a draft Community Health Improvement Plan in the summer. The CHIP will be finalized by the end of summer.

Chelsea Brass invites participants in the meeting to let her know if they’re interested in participating in the workgroups, or, if they can’t commit to meeting once a month, to follow the work of the organization and LHCF get the word out about the project. She can be reached at (512) 626-3580, or via email at: chelsea@LHCF.org.

In reaction to the presentation, Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team chair Erica Saenz noted that both her and Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team member Ann Teich are on the board of the Community Advancement Network serving Austin and Central Texas, that has a group working on language access. “It’s not specific to an area, but focuses on underserved areas, so there might be an opportunity for this group and committees to work together.”

* **City of Austin Neighborhood Housing and Community Development presentation**

Hilary Andersen is one of two neighborhood liaisons in the Client Services subdivision of the City Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) Department. She informs residents on home repairs and financial empowerment programs that are free or offer 0% interest rates for eligible residents (people living within the City limits, and making 80% of the median family income, or $61,450 for a four person household for example in the Austin-Round Rock metropolitan statistical area, as of June 1st, 2015, according to the limit set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development). She’s at (512) 974-3167, or via email at: hilary.andersen@austintexas.gov.

**Lead Healthy Homes Grants** offer up to $30,000 in free services like home inspections for lead, risk assessments, lead poisoning testing for children, lead removal and abatement, removal and storage of contents, and even relocation of occupants. “There has to be a child under the age of six in the home for the program to intervene, but that can be grandkid visiting his or her grandmother” (The young child doesn’t have to live in the house.), and the program is “available for renters and homeowners,” noted Hilary Andersen.

**Architectural Barrier Removal** is a grant of up to $15,000 to modify or retrofit the homes of elderly and/or severely disabled homeowners and renters. It aims to increase self-sufficiency, mobility, and safety by financing handrails, door widening, bussing or flashing devices (for persons with impaired hearing or vision, accessible door handles or faucet handles, shower grab bars, etc.

The **Home Rehabilitation Loan Program** helps homeowners bring their homes up to building code standards through 0% interest, deferred forgivable loans covering foundation, roof, plumbing, HVAC system, electrical work and other major interior and exterior repairs. Both reconstruction and rehabilitation are offered, depending on the state of the home. Loans are passed to the next kin if the owner passes away in order to avoid the resale rehabilitated or reconstructed homes to the benefit of people that do not qualify for the Home Rehabilitation Loan.

Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team chair Erica Saenz asked whether there were accommodations for reimbursing the loan for the elderly. Hilary Andersen explained they weren’t necessary because beneficiaries of the Home Rehabilitation Loan Program don’t have to repay the loan if they don’t stay in the home.

In the case of a rehabilitation, the assistance ranges between $15,000 and $75,000, whereas the average cost of a reconstruction is $130,000.

The **Private Lateral Pipeline Grant** is for financing the reparation or replacement of the portion of the wastewater service line located on a property that connects the building structure to the City wastewater main located in the street right-of-way or utility easement.

Some programs have additional, specific requirements.

The **Housing Smarts Homebuyer Education** program is for everyone (no condition of resource or other). It offers Homebuyer Education for first time homebuyers.

The **Down Payment Assistance** program is for first time homebuyers that have not owned a home in the last three years, or have been displaced due to a divorce. It covers down payment, eligible closing costs and pre-paid expenses with buying a home. The amount eligible depends on the financial need. The sales price must not exceed FHA limits, that's to say a maximum value of $217,000 (sales or appraisal), for either a new construction or existing structure. “We realize this value doesn’t match the reality in Austin,” commented Hilary Andersen, noting that her Department is working to move this limit.

The **Matched Savings** Program helps low-income individuals become economically self-sufficient through education, training, and asset building. As part of this program, the City will match $4 for every $1 saved. Matching funds can be applied to: higher education, purchasing a home, or investing in a small business endeavor. There are $300,000 in matching funds available, and no minimum to reach in order to participate in the program. Because it’s funded by a Health and Human Services grant, the criterias are different from other Neighborhood Housing and Community Development programs. Households befitting from Matched Savings have an income at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines or receive support under Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). They have less than $10,000 net worth (car or home do not count in assets). The program is accessible to undocumented residents. The money can be used for a teen. It must be used within two years. Unless of a documented emergency, there is no access to the funds. The City pays ACC or the business expenditures directly.

All applications to those programs are made on AustinTexas.gov/empower. People can call (512) 974-3100 for information, but mustn’t send Social Security numbers via email.

Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team chair Erica Saenz invites all participants of the meeting to share that information broadly.

* **Neighborhood Enhancement Team (NET) Rundberg Pilot**

The City of Austin Code Department’s Community Engagement Specialist for NET, Monica Guzmán (also a Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team member), began her presentation by recalling the 20131024-063 City Council resolution creating NET (accessible on AustinTexas.gov/department/neighborhood-enhancement-team). She then proceeded to explain that NET was about making the different City Departments collaborate. The goals of NET align with the Restore Rundberg initiative.

The project was launched last year in the Rundberg area, specifically in the Georgian Acres and North Lamar neighborhoods. Phase I was just completed in the Eastern part of Georgian Acres, and around Brownie Drive, in the North Lamar area. Phase II will begin in the near future, but details are not known yet.

An assessment of Phase I showed that it lacked community outreach. The officers went to every property, not only the repeated offenders’ ones, and unfortunately only wrote violation notices. The leaders of the project realized they needed to make more efforts towards community engagement, and “that’s why I was hired,” explained Monica Guzmán, specifying that she was wearing this hat for this presentation. Her goals are to establish relationships with new partners, strengthening the existing ones, and making sure the community knows the wonderful things going on. Monica Guzmán will help the owners of single units access City resources in order to improve their properties.

Austin Police Lieutenant Leverenz raised the issue of whether or not Restore Rundberg should be described as a community partner of NET, so Monica Guzmán is here to ask how the Revitalization Team wants to be recognized.

Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team chair Erica Saenz replied recalling that members of the Revitalization Team have attended several Rundberg alignment meetings organized in order to coordinate different Rundberg initiatives carried out by different City Departments, and saying she found it very valuable. She added that what the City is attempting to do is very important, and that with clear NET communication, there shouldn’t be any issue describing the Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team as a community partner of NET, and different Revitalization Team members approved.

Erica Saenz asked when the new Restore Rundberg brochure would be ready, and Monica Guzmán answered that it should be ready within a month.

Austin Police Region 2 Sergeant Keith Bazzle, sitting on the Revitalization Team for Commander Baker requested that Restore Rundberg officers are notified by the Code Department before its officer start working on NET.

**Announcements**

Jaime Padrón Elementary School librarian Daniela Ramos announced a **Makerspace Mania** event at Lanier High School on Saturday January 30 from 9am to 12pm.

An Eixsys Healthcare Systems representative presented a **weekly free health clinic** at the North Austin Muslim Community Center ever Saturday morning from 10am to 1pm that anyone who doesn’t have insurance can attend.

Jocelyn Connell introduced herself as the **new Lanier HS Family Resource Center Director** and Community School Coordinator, whose potable has just been place. She was with Holy World Church before joining Austin Voices for Education and the Youth

Lanier High School Council on At-Risk Youth advisor Melissa Axton introduced a new **parenting series** on ways to grow with one’s teen that she will conduct with the school Parent support specialist during the month of February.

Restore Rundberg Revitalization Team chair Erica Saenz reminded all participants the **University of Texas largest day of service, “The Project”**, was coming up on Saturday February 27, and that it was possible to sign up for volunteering as a community member.

*Adjourn at: 08:05pm*