

Howard Street Special Service Area #19
Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86766143540>
dial in: +1 312 626 6799 Meeting ID: 867 6614 3540

Wednesday, October 21, 2020 at 8:30 am
Meeting Agenda



Commissioners Present: Charlotte Walters, Carrie Sullivan
Commissioners Absent: Mike Smith, Gale Howard
Others Present: Cindy Plante - RPBA, Torrence Gardener - 49th Ward
Lizzy Kreindler & John Harris - A5

1. Call to order

Due to the pandemic the meeting is being held in a virtual format.

Gale is running late and Mike had a schedule conflict so there is no quorum; will wait until Gale arrives to vote on action items but can go ahead with announcements.

2. Public Comment

Torrence shared updates on the ongoing Howard Ashland Corridor Development Initiative. So far 300+ people have participated in online surveys and design charrettes. The timeline is being extended in order to allow more time to seek feedback and involvement from businesses and North of Howard neighbors. To that end, there will also be intercept surveys going on in the neighborhood and at community organizations like A Just Harvest.

Charlotte asked about the previous proposal for the site, which called for 220 apartments with ground level retail and arts uses. There's demand for housing in the area and more residents on Howard Street would mean potentially more customers for existing businesses.

Torrence asked if she'd been hearing anything from customers or others about the community garden space, or if anyone has thoughts on what they would like to see on the site.

Charlotte hasn't heard from anybody about preserving the garden and said it seems like there hasn't been much activity there this year compared to years past, probably due to covid or weather.

Carrie doesn't have especially strong feelings about it at this time because Factory Theater has been closed since March. Initially she thought some sort of community center might be good but then again

we've already got a community center across the street at Willye White Park, so that's probably not the answer but would like to see something that can try and address violence and crime in the area.

Charlotte added that there's a general need for increased outdoor cleanup and beautification in the neighborhood generally, particularly around the CTA stop and on Paulina because people are hanging out there and partying all the time.

Torrence asked if there's anything that could go on the lot that might benefit existing businesses.

Charlotte said a mixed use apartment building with active uses on the bottom would be nice and expressed a desire to bring more people to the area. The Elevation Lofts property that opened earlier this year has already mostly leased up within a few weeks of opening. More residents in the area can benefit existing businesses and the presence of more people in the area might help fill vacant storefronts.

Carrie agrees and points to the 415 Howard building on the Evanston side, which is also consistently 97% leased.

Cindy added that the 415 building has also changed ownership several times since coming online, with sale price increasing each time, which contributed to the TIF on the Evanston side as well as real estate transfer tax, allowing for investments throughout their side of the Howard corridor.

Torrence asked if anyone had any thoughts on more novel uses - there has been some interest in urban farming and marijuana cultivation.

Charlotte indicated that that might be OK as part of a building - it might be a draw to bring people to visit the area. The site used to be industrial and was home to a newspaper printing firm.

Torrence asked if there were any use types that people specifically don't want to see on the site.

Charlotte said she doesn't want to see another nursing home since there are already so many in the area and they're not well run. They don't contribute or help surrounding businesses.

Carrie added that she'd be hesitant about bringing in additional social services agencies as well because there are already so many concentrated in this area. Doesn't want to blame them for crime or problems, but they're also not really helping either.

Charlotte agreed, is frustrated that the existing agencies don't do much to manage or mitigate issues with clients congregating outside for long periods of time.

Torrence shared the survey link and thanked commissioners for their feedback.

3. Approval of the minutes from September meeting

This item was held due to lack of quorum.

4. Old Business

a. SSA renewal update

Cindy Shared updates on the SSA renewal process - we're now in the City Council phase and the public hearing has been tentatively scheduled for Friday, November 13 between 10am and noon.

Sheridan SSA54 will be at the same meeting, along with two other SSAs from elsewhere in the city.

Property owners will be getting a legally-mandated public hearing notice in the mail in the coming weeks. We will also need to have 5 people prepared to testify at the public hearing about the SSA if anybody is interested in volunteering. We've already got people from Jarvis but will need some Howard folks too.

b. Marketing & Chalk Howard update

Lizzy shared updates on social media marketing metrics and Chalk Howard performance. Turnout for each of the instagram live videos has been steady throughout the series, and posts about Badou and Hip Circle were the top performing posts overall. We're also working on finalizing plans for exhibiting the finished work on Howard Street. The last session is this Friday featuring Sol Cafe.

Facebook has seen steady 10% growth and is currently at 4,400 likes. Top performing posts included Badou and Salernos. New creative will be added soon now that we have photos back from the sessions that were done a few weeks ago. On instagram we've reached 600 followers. Top posts this money were promoting Chalk Howard at Hip Circle and the mural unveiling at Howard Area Community Center.

Charlotte mentioned that she's been getting a lot of customers on bikes lately - people passing by the shop on the City's suggested bike route connecting Evanston to the lakefront path. Suggested trying to do something with this in the future.

Cindy is familiar with the route and asked if she's been seeing mostly casual riders or groups in lycra.

Charlotte says it's been a mix of both.

John added that they're going to try and promote delivery and carryout during the colder weather.

5. New Business

a. Chalk Art Exhibition plans

Charlotte asked about printing the art on banners to hang on the garden fence along with the holiday lights.

Lizzy said that we're working with Nate on more of an art walk concept with work being displayed at businesses. This would also include some sort of kickoff event that might feature a few guided tours, or having Nate come out to do a piece on the sidewalk.

Charlotte agrees, suggesting marketing this to NU and Loyola students.

Cindy agrees but cautioned that both universities are operating mostly online this semester and haven't had students return to campus housing, so there isn't the same sort of density of students that we'd have to target in a normal year.

Carrie asked about safety concerns and compliance with covid guidelines.

John said we could skip guided tours in that case and just promote it as a self-guided art walk.

Charlotte asked about time of day for the kickoff and recommended that it be during the afternoon on a Saturday.

John said they're looking at Saturdays, maybe November 14, probably a noon-2pm time frame to avoid having anything going on after dark. Could investigate adding security during the kickoff day if that's a concern.

Cindy asked if November 14 is maybe too soon and asked how people would feel about tying it in with Small Business Saturday events and promotions on November 28.

Charlotte likes the idea of combining it with Small Business Saturday.

Carrie is a little concerned about dividing people's attention but agrees that it has potential.

b. Halloween

Cindy shared that the Park District Trunk Or Treat Event is moving forward but they're doing it at Willye White on Friday the 30th rather than on Saturday the 31st. How are folks feeling about trick or treating? Businesses have been starting to ask.

Charlotte says she was planning on having someone in costume in front of the store handing out candy in the afternoon either way.

Carrie agrees, since candy can be distributed outside we can move forward on promoting trick or treating.

Cindy asked if people want to do it on Halloween or try to overlap with the park district like last year?

Charlotte and Carrie both agreed that it should be on Halloween.

Cindy will send around a signup sheet and order candy for delivery to participating businesses next week. We'll update last year's flier and social media postings for reuse.

c. 2021 Meeting & Event dates

Cindy asked if people are ok sticking with 3rd wednesday of the month meetings for next year. Any interest in moving the time?

Carrie said earlier is better for her because of her regular job. Zoom has been easier and she hopes we're able to continue on virtual meetings. Charlotte agreed.

Cindy said we can't officially vote on the calendar due to lack of quorum but it'll be back on the agenda in November.

6. Adjournment

Meeting ended at 9:53.

Next SSA Commissioners Meeting: Wednesday, November 18