

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**
Rock Island County Building
Count Board Room, 3rd Floor
1504 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL

4/8/2024 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Thoms asked City Clerk Samantha Gange to call the roll.

Present: Alderpersons Moses Robinson, Jenni Swanson, Dylan Parker, Mark Poulos, Bill Healy and Mayor Mike Thoms.

Alderman Randy Hurt arrived at 6:04 p.m.

Absent: Alderman Kevin Maynard

Staff: Parks & Recreation Director John Gripp, Attorney Leslie Day, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City Staff.

3. Public Comment

Mayor Thoms asked if anyone in the public wished to speak. No residents were signed up to speak.

4. Presentations

a. Update on the West End Revitalization

Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Community Center Executive Director Jerry Jones introduced the West End Revitalization Plan's Steering Committee, Board, and representatives from its work groups. The plan was formulated over the last year and was a heavily community-involved process.

The revitalization plan is built on a solid foundation of data, authentic community engagement, evidence, and best practices. The plan supports collaboration, transparency, and trust. A survey was conducted in the West

End of Rock Island, and that community indicated that trust was one of the biggest issues. It is a three-year plan with a five-year vision but is expected to be long-term and part of the community work going forward. The plan addresses the symptoms and the root cause of issues faced by the West End community. The plan's vision is to make the West End a preferred place to live and thrive. The goal is to build the West End community's wealth, power, and livability. The values that are embedded in the plan's work are based in justice, equity, collaboration, empowerment, respect, inclusion, communication, and trust. The five intersecting impact areas addressed by the plan, include economic vitality, assets & income, infrastructure & visual appeal, housing & land, and community engagement.

To strengthen the civic capital in the West End and beyond, platforms and metrics would be established to effectively elevate West End community voices, while a participatory budgeting process to reflect community priorities would also be created. Building the West End residents' assets and incomes would involve supporting a service corps model as part of a broader workforce development and providing access to financial services and banking products as an entry point to financial stability. Currently, there are few financial institutions in the West End, limiting opportunities and interactions. The plan would also look into finding ways to fund and incentivize education savings account for children, providing them with upward mobility after high school.

The plan would increase housing stability/quality and community control by supporting the expansion of a proactive rental inspection program and tenants' association, expanding the housing supply, and establishing a housing rehab support program. The plan is expected to increase the West End's economic vitality by adopting a community navigator model to support businesses and preparing them for contract opportunities. Infrastructure and visual design would be improved by redeveloping Franklin Field, strengthening affordable broadband access, and enhancing streetscape.

A West End Community Development Corporation (CDC) will be established to implement the revitalization plan. The CDC would explore the creation of a West End Special Service Area (SSA). The MLK Center is expecting to continue to serve as the backbone by facilitating community ownership, partner engagement, resource mobilization, communications, measurement, and evaluation.

Mr. Jones mentioned this plan has gained a lot of interest, including from donors outside of Rock Island. Regional, state, and federal grants are available for this type of work. They already received a \$300,000 grant. The seed money they are anticipating will be used to increase their internal capacity, giving them the ability to tap into resources outside of Rock Island. The majority of the \$300,000 grant will go towards increasing staff as most models for this type of work require a minimum of five full-time staff members. At the moment, they only have two full-time staff. Moving forward, part of the grant is expected to be used for opportunities to show the community tangible ways that the revitalization is moving forward.

Although a survey hasn't been conducted, Mr. Jones said the residents he encountered were in favor of exploring the creation of an SSA. He believes if the community members are shown what will come of this investment and a participatory budgeting process is utilized, residents will be inclined to invest in themselves.

The vision for the CDC is that it will be a non-profit that will govern itself and have its own staff. The MLK Center will continue to be the driving force of the plan until the CDC can stand on its own. Once the CDC is in control, the MLK Center will be a partner. Mr. Jones anticipates a facility will be needed, but they won't be exploring that until the third year. Within the next 6 months, they will recruit a CDC envisioning committee to help establish the CDC.

5. Adjourn

- a. Motion: Motion to adjourn.
VV Voice vote is needed.

MOTION:

Alderperson Poulos moved to adjourn; Alderperson Healy seconded.

VOTE:

Motion PASSED on a 6-0-1 voice vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Healy, Robinson, Hurt, Swanson. Nay: None.
Absent: Maynard

The study session concluded at 6:27 p.m.