

STATE OF KANSAS)
WYANDOTTE COUNTY)) SS
CITY OF KANSAS CITY, KS)

SPECIAL SESSION, THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2023

The Unified Government Commission of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, met in Special Session, Thursday, June 29, 2023, with seven members present: Bynum, Commissioner At-Large First District; Burroughs, Commissioner At-Large Second District; McKiernan, Commissioner Second District; Johnson, Commissioner Fourth District; Kane, Commissioner Fifth District; Markley, Commissioner Sixth District; Garner, Mayor/CEO, presiding. Townsend, Commissioner First District; Ramirez, Commissioner Third District; Stites, Seventh District; and Davis, Commissioner Eight District; were absent. The following officials were also in attendance: David Johnston, County Administrator; Bridgette Cobbins, Assistant County Administrator; Angela Lawson, Deputy Chief Counsel; Brett Deichler, Unified Government Clerk; Monica Sparks, Deputy Unified Government Clerk; Greg Talkin, Director of Neighborhood Resource Center; Kayla Hower, Program Coordinator for Livable Neighborhoods; Minah Chapell, Neighborhood Liaison for Livable Neighborhoods, and Reginald Lindsey, Budget Director;

Mayor Garner said before I call the meeting to order I want to announce that we do have individuals attending remotely as well as on-site. All participants joining by phone, should please mute your phones when not speaking to avoid background noise. During the meeting, make sure you announce yourself by name and title every time you speak so the public that is participating knows exactly who is speaking. This is critical given the number of remote participants and is also current guidance from the Kansas Attorney General. I would also like to remind, especially here on the 5th floor, that you please be sure to speak loudly and clearly into the microphone to ensure that your comments are being captured by the Clerk for an accurate record of the meeting.

Mayor Garner called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL: Johnson, Kane, Markley, Bynum, Burroughs, McKiernan, Garner.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL SESSION of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, to be conducted in a hybrid format on Thursday, June 29, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. in the

fifth floor conference room of the Municipal Office Building for a presentation by Livable Neighborhoods.

CONSENT TO MEETING of the governing body of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, accepting service of the foregoing notice, waiving all and any irregularities in such service and in such notice, and consent and agree that we, the governing body, shall meet at the time and place therein specified and for the purpose therein stated.

Mayor Garner said this Special Session tonight will be a presentation by Livable Neighborhoods. For those of you that don't know, and those that do know, Livable Neighborhoods is a key part, not just for the Unified Government, but also for our community. When you talk about cultivating neighborhood groups, neighborhood leaders and bringing forth these individuals and groups to better collaborate as neighbors, as a community with elected officials, other Unified Government stakeholders to improve the quality of life for all our residents and to do so in a way that enhances and embodies that spirit of service, and I like to always say love and neighborly communication and collaboration. Thank you so much for being here. I'm going to turn this meeting over to our Administrator, David Johnston, and he'll lead the presentation from here..

David Johnston, County Administrator, said Commissioners and Mayor, over the last couple of months during my tenure here, you voiced you'd like to have an update of what's going on with Livable Neighborhoods and their relationships with various community groups and the best way to have that is to have that department come and give a presentation. We're pleased to have their Director, Kayla Hower, here to lead the discussion and the floor is yours.

Kayla Hower, Program Coordinator for Livable Neighborhoods, said I'm also the Executive Director of the Livable Neighborhoods Task Force. I appreciate you having us today and I'll have my colleague introduce herself as well. **Minah Chapell** said I'm the Neighborhood Liaison with Livable Neighborhoods.

COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

Who are we?

Unique partnership between organized neighborhood groups and the Unified Government

- Livable Neighborhoods Division (UG)
- Livable Neighborhoods Task Force (501c3)

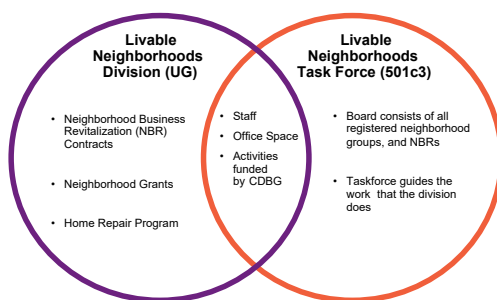


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Ms. Hower said Livable Neighborhoods is a unique partnership between organized neighborhood groups and the Unified Government. Our goal is to improve the livability of our neighborhoods through strategic partnerships between neighborhood leaders, local government representatives, and community organizations. For those of you who don't know, Livable Neighborhoods started in the Mayor's Office in 1995 and during that time Kansas City, Kansas was facing heavy crime, blight, a dwindling tax base, and the effects of white flight. Since then, Livable Neighborhoods has grown and evolved and we're thinking of this era of Livable Neighborhoods as Livable Neighborhoods 3.0.

I'm the third Program Manager and Minah is the third Neighborhood Liaison and I started in my role about six months ago and Minah started about four months ago.

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To dive a little deeper into how Livable Neighborhood functions on a technical level, we really have a quasi-governmental partnership. The UG brings a set of programs and resources and the Task Force brings its own set of assets. As a UG Division, Livable Neighborhoods manages the Neighborhood Business Revitalization contracts or NBR contracts. We manage the neighborhood

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grants and a minor Home Repair Program. The UG Division also provides staff, Minah and myself and office space.

The Livable Neighborhood Task Force consists of all of our registered neighborhood groups as well as the NBRs. This resident run task force also guides the work of the division and has been awarded Community Development Block Grant funding to use towards approved activities and equipment.

COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

Neighborhood Business Revitalization (NBR) Organizations:
A brief overview



We've already mentioned NBRs and we're going to talk about them several times during this presentation, so I wanted to take a moment to explain what the role of the NBRs are in our community. Right now we have eight NBRs and they have a long-standing contract with the Unified Government to provide a scope of services to residents, businesses and neighborhood groups. They're non-profit organizations and they're formed with a Board of Directors and each NBR works within a set of specific geographic boundaries.

They provide services in the following areas. First, neighborhoods, so neighborhood engagement. They increase community cohesion by hosting parades, community festivals, assisting in comprehensive plan engagement, and helping support neighborhood groups. They also work to improve community health by working with our Health Department on specific area initiatives and they also work with Parks & Rec on programs and initiatives. They increase the opportunity for our residents by helping create amenities such as parks and playgrounds, walking trails, community gardens, murals and bike lanes.

Next, we have Business. They provide business support and increase economic prosperity of their community. They provide support for local businesses by helping to contact

resources, spotlighting businesses, and providing opportunity for businesses to connect with neighborhoods.

Revitalization of Community, so our NBRs also reduce blight. They host neighborhood cleanups and they work with their local codes officer on problem-solving issues. They work to increase safety and perception of safety by working with Community Policing to problem-solve issues and they improve infrastructure by assisting with the comprehensive planning process, advocate for community improvements and represent a specific geographic area on UG committees and boards.

I also wanted to make the distinguish—the difference between NBRs and Neighborhood Groups. They are different and sometimes people use that term interchangeably. Neighborhood groups are also non-profits, but they're typically grassroots organizations with a much smaller geographic area. Neighborhood Groups can go by various names such as Neighborhood Watch, Homeowners Association, Community Group or Neighborhood Council, but really, they share the same purpose.

Neighborhood Groups are organizations that unite residents in crime prevention and block watches, neighborhood beautification and cleanup and community forums and a relay of neighborhood news.



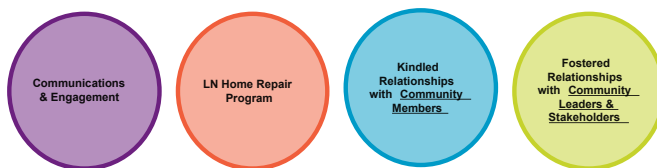
What makes a livable neighborhood? We've got all these circles on here with different things that make a neighborhood livable. Livable Neighborhoods can be viewed through a community development lens and Community Development plays a crucial role in creating livable and sustainable neighborhoods. While Community Development, especially within the UG, is commonly associated with affordable housing and Community Development Block Grants, it

really encompasses a broader scope. Community Development involves various activities aimed at providing essential services to communities and enhancing their livability and sustainability.

You might notice that the item in these circles are also reflective of the components in the comprehensive planning process. By integrating these aspects and fostering a collaboration between various departments, Livable Neighborhoods strives to create strong, vibrant and inclusive communities.

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Impact by Numbers (year -to -date)

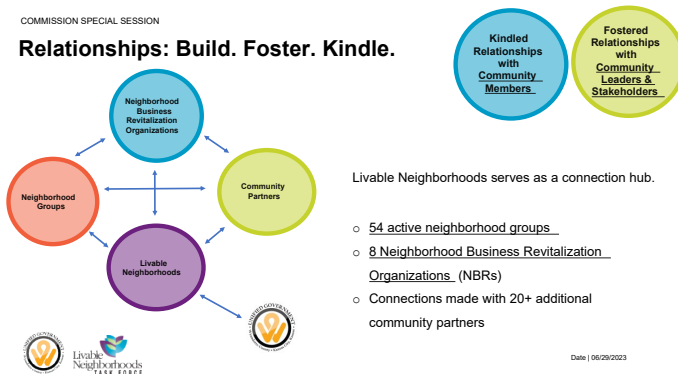


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Minah Chapell, Neighborhood Liaison, said as Kayla mentioned, we are considering our office to be ushering a new era in Livable Neighborhood history. Livable Neighborhoods 3.0 is committed to continuing to serve and engage our neighborhoods and maintain a space in which communities thrive. We aim to touch and positively impact the greatest number of our Wyandotte County neighbors. In this, we strive to equip those that we have touched with the skills and resources to go and empower and water others in their prospective communities, but don't just take our word for it, let's observe the 2023 numbers.

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Relationships: Build. Foster. Kindle.



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Livable Neighborhood serves as a connection hub. There are currently 54 active neighborhood groups registered with our office geographically. The neighborhood groups range from State Line Road as far west as Piper. We manage contracts for eight NBRs.

We do not currently have any registered neighborhood groups or NBRs in Bonner Springs or Edwardsville, but we are open to any conversation to extend opportunities to our Wyandotte County neighbors. However, in order for us to have an NBR to serve Bonner Springs or Edwardsville, we need to have a community organization willing to serve as that representative and our office will be open to that discussion. Additionally, there was a request made in May to share NBR contact information with the Commission and that information has been provided.

In our time at the UG we have made connections with over 20 additional community partners and have had 50 one-on-one conversations with said community partners and residents. We have attended and presented at Neighborhood Group meetings, larger community gatherings, exchanged countless emails, phone calls and impromptu virtual meetings. Through these community conversations we've listened a lot, learned even more and have identified the key challenges facing our community.

By bringing together passionate community leaders and government officials, we create a collaborative environment where ideas flourish, practical solutions are found, and positive change becomes a reality.

COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

A Forum for Communication & Discussion

- Monthly Task Force meeting is a space where updates are provided from various local government entities, non-profit organizations, and neighborhood groups and members.
 - Community updates from 15UG entities, 10 local non-profits, and numerous residents.
 - An average of 50-60 attendees.
- Voice broadcasting services are provided to registered neighborhood groups.
 - 2,667 calls delivered to neighborhood group members.
- Provide weekly e-newsletter, and printed monthly newsletter



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COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

Addressing Home Repair Needs

Residents named access and availability to home repair programs as a possible avenue to address effects of systemic injustice among our most vulnerable neighbors.

- o Partner with 8 non-profits organizations and private contractors.
- o Completion of 22 projects for homeowners and their families.
- o Total of \$42,748.10 with an average of \$1,943.10 per project.



"It is the greatest good to the greatest number which is the measure of right and wrong." - Jeremy Bentham

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Residents have named access and availability to home repair programs as a possible avenue to address effects of systemic injustice among our most vulnerable neighbors. Livable Neighborhoods coordinates a minor Home Repair Program. The minor Home Repair Program is city funded and was founded with the intention of assisting residents who are cited by Property Maintenance Compliance to bring their home back into compliance.

The program serves residents who are homeowners, live in their home, whose income falls below 200% of the federal poverty rate and primarily assist older adults over 60 or individuals with disabilities.

This year our office has completed 22 home repair projects totaling \$42,748. Currently we are not accepting anymore applications for this program as our funding has been committed for 2023. Home repair support is a great need in Wyandotte County, particularly in Kansas City, and we have continued to receive requests for home repairs that have far exceeded our financial capacity to help given the current funding our office receives.

When we reach our financial capacity, we rely on our community partners for support; however, not many offer home repair and if they do, funding is very specific to project populations, income and zip code.

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Our monthly Task Force meeting is a space where updates are provided from various local government entities, non-profit organizations, and neighborhood groups and members. There have been community updates provided by 15 Unified Government entities, 10 local non-profits, and numerous residents. Typically, we expect between 50 and 75 attendees at these meetings.

Livable Neighborhoods offers communication and engagement services to the neighborhood groups registered with us. For example, Call Hub, a voice broadcasting service provided through our office, has allowed us to deliver 2,667 to neighborhood group members. In addition to voice broadcasting, our office sends out a weekly e-newsletter to 412 subscribers and distributes printed monthly newsletters to bridge the digital divide. Printed newsletters can also be customized and provided to neighborhood groups by request as part of the communication and engagement services that we offer.

COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

Notable Partnerships

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| KC Digital Drive | MOCSA |
| KCK Shepherd's Center | Neighborhood Crime Prevention Patrol |
| Area Agency on Aging | UG Planning and Urban Design |
| UG Solid Waste | UG Housing Fellow |
| Law Enforcement Advisory Board | UG Health Department |
| UG Property Maintenance Compliance | Crosslines Community Outreach |



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Ms. Hower said our notable partnerships. Our work thrives on partnerships, both internal to the UG and external. These are some of our current key partners, but this list certainly does not encompass all the relationships that we've built. These partners help us as well as the community

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work toward violence prevention, improved community policing efforts, safe and affordable housing as well as caring for our most vulnerable neighbors.

COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

Highlights from Community Conversations

- Need for capacity building
- NBR Updates
- Community Policing Improvements
- Distrust of UG
- Lack of communication
- Need for streamlined efforts



"You can't really know where you're going until you know where you've been." - Maya Angelou



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Coming in as new staff members, one of the goals in our conversations with residents, as well as community partners, was to understand the history of interactions with the UG and Livable Neighborhoods and how we can take that information and move forward in a meaningful and productive way. We've identified common themes stemming from our conversations. We've heard that NBRs and Neighborhood Groups need help with capacity building in terms of seeking external funding outside of grants and contracts with the UG as well as leadership development.

When talking with each NBR partner, many brought up that this contract scope needs to be reviewed and updated. Additionally, we have eight NBR organizations with drastically different approaches to the NBR scope of work.

As far as Community Policing Improvements go, we've received feedback from neighborhood leaders that Community Policing just isn't what it used to be. Nearly all of our conversations had themes of distrust with the UG. Residents and community partners feel like the UG doesn't have their best interest in mind—best interest of residents in mind when making decisions and that they don't feel like there's follow-through on promises and there's a lack of accountability.

Lack of communication was another threat in these community conversations. This lack of communication to the public—this is a lack of communication to the public as well as internally. Residents are reporting that it's difficult to find answers to their questions and get a response back from some staff members, departments or elected officials. There's an overall dissatisfaction with the 311 reporting system. Residents feel like their issues don't get addressed through the current

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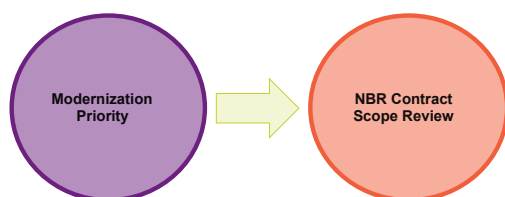
system and it seems like there's a need for communication or training for residents about how different departments within the UG function.

Finally, there's a need for streamlined efforts. In many of our conversations people said that it seems like the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. For example, there are often multiple departments reaching out to community organizations, especially NBRs, about the same issue and there's no process in place for cross-departmental collaboration. Through these conversations we've identified three focus areas; modernization, community engagement, and public trust, which Minah will further elaborate on.

COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

The "Year of Visioning"

We've been listening, and this is what we've learned.



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Ms. Chapell said we've been listening and learning. We've identified themes and conversational highlights and we've now been able to move into what we are referring to as the year of visioning. Our year of visioning allows us to outline current priorities and brainstorm solutions to address comments, concerns or doubts expressed in these community conversations, and oddly enough, the year of visioning aligns with the comprehensive plan.

The first theme that our office has identified is modernization. From our records NBR contract scope was last established in 2013. NBR leaders have pointed out that the scope of work within this current contract is unclear. They are wanting to be responsive, but they need clarity of the parameters of their contract and more concise language. The lack of clarity creates difficulty for staff when reviewing quarterly reports prior to issuing payment because there are no set parameters to gauge where the goals have been met.

Additionally, due to varying size in staffing and financial capacity, the NBR organizations, there's not going to a one-size-fits-all approach and we will need to have further

discussions with our NBR partners to establish these parameters. In short, the Livable Neighborhoods Office suggests the review of the NBR contract scope.

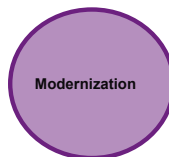
COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

The "Year of Visioning"

We've been listening, and this is what we've learned.

Livable Neighborhoods can best usher in the new by:

- NBR Quarterly Meetings in partnership with the Mayor's Office
- Updating the Resource Guide.
- Refreshing the neighborhood group registry.
- Developing a strategic plan specific to the new management of our office.
- Revamping the "Start a Neighborhood Group" guide.



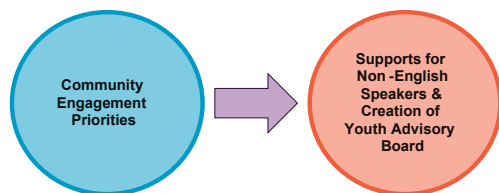
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Some additional ways that we can usher in the new include continued NBR quarterly meetings in partnership with the Mayor's Office, updating the resource guide, which is currently in progress and we hope to have completed by the fall; refreshing the NBR group registry, which as of today is complete; develop a new Livable Neighborhood Task Force Strategic Plan, specific to the new management of our office, and revamping the "Start a Neighborhood Group" guide.

COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

The "Year of Visioning"

We've been listening, and this is what we've learned.



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Up next is community engagement priorities. Community engagement was another theme from our conversations. Specifically, we have identified there was need for supports for non-English speakers. Diversity of our residents is one of the many strengths of our community; however, we are missing key groups of our community by not providing translation of documents, information and interpreters at meetings.

New documents that we are creating in the Livable Neighborhoods Office such as the resource guide, we plan to have translated in, at minimum, Spanish. We've also identified that

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there is a need for the inclusion of youth voices and participation. There is a struggle to get youth involved at a neighborhood level and this has been an ongoing concern for Livable Neighborhood Task Force members. As we know the youth are our future and they bring an important perspective to the table.

Currently our office has a pleasure of hosting two ProX interns who are working on community youth engagement. We plan to tap into existing youth task force and groups as well as utilize our community partners who serve our youth to get a better understanding about how we can involve more young people in our neighborhoods and we hope to create a Youth Advisory Board.

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The "Year of Visioning"

We've been listening, and this is what we've learned.

Livable Neighborhoods can better engage our community by:

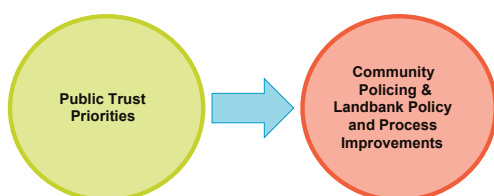
- Partnering on community events like National Night Out, Neighborhood Summit, and Community Development Workshop.
- Hosting community events like annual luncheon & National Good Neighbor Day.
- Creating an informational postcard.
- Collaborating with Parks and Rec on events



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Some additional ways that Livable Neighborhoods can better engage our community are by partnering on community events like National Night Out, Neighborhood Summit, and Community Development Workshops, hosting community events like an annual luncheon and National Good Neighbor Day celebrations, creating an informational postcard, which we hope might be sent out with some other forms of communication such as the BPU bills and collaborating with Parks & Rec on events.

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The "Year of Visioning"*We've been listening, and this is what we've learned.*

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The last theme our office has identified is public trust. Community members have expressed that little trust is held in the Unified Government's willingness or ability to maintain practices that benefit residents are followed through on promises. From our feedback we continue to hear from neighborhood leaders that they would like to see improvements in Community Policing and moving forward we would like to work with the Chief of Police to improve working relationships between neighborhood leaders and Community Police Officers.

There has been feedback calling for improvements to our Land Bank Policy. We know the Land Bank Policy is currently in the process of being updated and we have been relaying feedback to Land Bank staff regarding resident concerns.

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The "Year of Visioning"*We've been listening, and this is what we've learned.***Livable Neighborhoods can grow and maintain public trust by:**

- Increased communication with community policing
- Land Bank – notification and advisory board
- Creating the content for a civic engagement program (Dotte University).



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Livable Neighborhoods can grow and maintain public trust by increasing communication with Community Policing, working with Land Bank staff to notify neighborhoods of Land Bank property action and continued involvement of Livable Neighborhoods Task Force members on the Land Bank Advisory Board and, finally, creating content for a Civic Engagement Program, which we think would be great to call Dotte University.

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Filling the Gaps

- Communication
- Customer service
- Connection to community resources
- Navigating local government processes
- Coordination of multi - departmental issues



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Ms. Hower said Livable Neighborhoods fills the gaps within the UG. When residents feel like they've exhausted other resources or don't know where to go, they can come to us and we don't always know the answer, but we can find it. By forming these cross-departmental partnerships and understanding how the UG works, we can help residents to access the services that they need.

COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

Work with us to **engage** the **community**



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We know that there's great potential in Kansas City, Kansas and Wyandotte County as a whole, not just for Livable Neighborhoods, but instead thriving neighborhoods. However, as previously mentioned, there's a distrust of the local government within the community. Community members feel that there's been lack of follow-through on promises and commitments made, but Livable Neighborhoods is the bridge to rebuild trust.

By working with Livable Neighborhoods internally, we can help provide connection to the grassroots community leaders and we can foster relationships with community partners and gain feedback about what the community needs. We can host community forums and discussions to improve resident and government partnerships to elicit change.

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COMMISSION SPECIAL SESSION

Strategically Utilize Livable Neighborhoods

- Liaison between the UG and community
- Navigate multi - departmental issues
- Consult Livable Neighborhoods about intra - departmental processes
- Involve Livable Neighborhoods in community development and planning discussions specifically around:
 - Community Benefits Agreements
 - Incremental Development
 - Safe and Affordable Housing



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There's significant potential to leverage our insight connections and expertise to benefit the community as well as the UG. Livable Neighborhoods should be considered a liaison between the UG and the community and vice-versa. We can navigate and facilitate discussion on multi-departmental issues and we would love to be consulted about intra-departmental processes because we have a view internal to the UG, but we also have those strong relationships with partners and community members outside of the UG that give us a unique perspective.

Additionally, Livable Neighborhoods could be instrumental in Community Development and Planning activities, specifically, discussions around community benefits agreements, incremental development, and safe and affordable housing.

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Livable Neighborhoods will advocate on behalf of residents



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All of that said, we're not going to sacrifice the reputation and trust that Livable Neighborhoods has with the community. We want to continue to advocate on behalf of residents. We want to help, seek, follow up, and follow through on commitments made and we want to work within the process of local government to move change forward.

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Questions or Comments?

Kayla Hower, MPH
 Livable Neighborhoods - Program Coordinator
 Livable Neighborhoods Task Force Executive Director
kjhower@wycokck.org
 913-573-8645



Minah Chapell
 Livable Neighborhoods - Neighborhood Liaison
mchapell@wycokck.org
 913-573-8740



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Thank you for your time and I'm open to any questions or comments.

Commissioner Kane was inaudible. (Mic was not on)

Commissioner Markley said I think the Dotte University is a good idea. I also think not everyone's going to go through the university, so we just have to keep education in mind as a whole. From the public trust perspective, I think some of it is clearly a fail on our end to do that loop around where we're giving people back the information when they call us. I do think some of it though is that people are asking us to do things that we can't do. They don't understand that we can't do it or why we can't do it. I think these commissioners have all heard me say that I think a huge role for us as commissioners is that education role, but it's helpful if your department can provide some of that as well and I think that helps solve some of the public trust issues where people—and I know we hear it as well. As commissioners, they ask us to do something and we can't and to them that's a breach of the public trust even though we never could have—I mean we can't do it. So providing that education of what we can do, what we can't do, what's within our power, what's not within our power, why maybe we can't do something I think is an important part of creating that relationship so that they understand it's not just that we failed them, it's there are reasons why certain things can't happen the way they should.

Commissioner Burroughs said when I initially met with the group, I had a lot of concerns and you said 95 and we've spent a lot of money going into neighborhood groups. Do we have measurables to determine if we as a government entity are getting a return on that investment? I mean it's one thing when people come in and they are opposed to a development because it doesn't

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have everything in it, one or two members of the group like, so they don't want the development. They didn't meet with the development group, they—whatever reason and here we are on a short timeline to push development through because time is money and it upsets them. When I read some of the accomplishments and some of the things you talked about, the distrust—it's hard to distrust people that you don't even know and I just would like to know what kind of return on investment we're getting from our individual groups.

If we are funding them through our General Fund, we should have a report of something on a quarterly basis, if not an annual basis, that lets us know what your group has accomplished this year with the dollars that have gone into the Director or the organization. It's not anything more than we're asking of anybody else to be held accountable for those that time and energy and I agree with Commissioner Kane, I call 311 where phone calls go to die and it's unfortunate because that was put out there just for the reason that we're talking about now with Livable Neighborhoods and reporting process.

I want to be a good partner, but I also want our neighborhood groups to understand that it's hard for us to know what you're doing when we hear this, but we don't get a report as to what your group has done through the following year.

Ms. Hower said for our NBR groups, we do get quarterly reports from them in order to process their quarterly payments for invoices. So we do have those reports. As far as our individual neighborhood groups, they can apply for a \$500 grant each fall and they do have a small grant report about what they use that for. Typically it's like a community garden, small improvements like a neighborhood watch sign, things like that, but definitely, for the larger dollars spent we do get those quarterly reports from our NBRs and then we get usually, not usually, we require an annual report prior to renewing their contract each year.

On the public trust issue, I think it goes very—it's really like Commissioner Markley said, I think there's the lack of education and people not understanding what's possible and what's not and what's an ask that's outside of the bounds of what the Commission can do. So, I think working with us to help educate the public and help make those communications known are really important. Also, people—I feel like when they don't know an individual or they don't know people, it's really easy for people to point fingers. I think if we open up those dialogues and

encourage that education, and we can help with that through our office, we might be able to bridge those gaps a little bit more. Thank you for your comments.

Commissioner Kane said I think Commissioner Markley hit it on the head. We can't fix everything nor do we have enough money to fix everything. I think the way Fisher and those guys came in and changed how you evaluate the roads and stuff like that has made a difference, but when you tell somebody you can't fix their road for three years, it's frustrating and there are roads—certain roads are a lot worse than the people they're asking for. It's frustrating for us because we can't give them what they want, but yet we have guidelines to go by, so sometimes we get choked off by what we can and what we can't do and we ask staff to do a whole lot with a little bit of money.

Commissioner Bynum said just a couple of comments, observations. First of all, Ms. Chapell has been on the job for four months, which means that it's been four months, the duration that this office has been at full staff of two people in more than four years. So, we need to be mindful of the fact that this office was operating with one full-time employee and producing results for four years and then we were happy to get Kayla and then I'm sure Kayla was delighted to be able to bring Minah onboard. I'm just pointing out that fully staffed in this department is two people and they do an incredible amount of work in their work hours with a staff of two people and it's always been that way at Livable Neighborhoods. Just constant production of information, relationship building, sponsoring things, helping neighborhoods, navigate to where resources are or where answers to questions are, so it's very impressive. I'm really pleased that you are the two individuals that are here with us now doing this work because I've watched you demonstrate, the caring you bring.

Fifty to sixty individuals monthly are attending the monthly Livable Neighborhoods meeting. That held steady during COVID when everything went online and still 50 to 60 people showed up virtually because of what they knew Livable Neighborhoods provided to them and it's an interesting juxtaposition to identify communication issues when I've seen and been present for the massive amounts of information that are shared at those meetings. You also do a really nice job of sharing a lot of great information in that weekly newsletter, so if you believe that those

things can be improved upon, then more power to you. I'm just really happy that you're here. I know the good work that Livable Neighborhoods has done for decades now.

I think the Dotte University concept is very interesting. Greg will remember when these kinds of undertakings were beginning, for example, at the beginning of a concept like Livable Neighborhoods where we had government and neighborhoods at the table in partnership for problem-solving, we did a lot of different types of classes. So, we offered all kinds of different classes to the residents and different departments within the government would circulate through the office to bring, you know, codes information or obviously crime prevention through environmental design or we did landlord training. Livable Neighborhoods is what advocated for the fact that we have a rental license in this community, so there's been a lot of really good work done there.

It's been interesting for me, as I've been engaged with it, to watch how Livable Neighborhoods 3.0 almost becomes a need to retrain because we have new people. We have new neighborhood leaders, we have new neighbors and so that's work that you don't do just once and then you're done with it because you told somebody 15 years ago that you can't put a stuffed couch on your porch. It has to be taught and then retaught and we have to go over it and over it and over it. I just feel like it's time as you envision Livable Neighborhoods 3.0 and envision something like a Dotte University, I think you're right on time and right on target because I think we have a whole community of folks ready to hear that message even though we may have shared that message before or it doesn't matter because you can't just share it once and consider it a job done. It's constant. I appreciate what you're doing and really glad to have you in our community.

Commissioner Markley said Commissioner Bynum reminded me of the comments you were making about getting youth involved and I would say, I don't think this is news to anybody or insulting anybody, but there's a clear set of our population that participates in most of our neighborhood groups and not only are they not youth, but they're not even my age. My husband and I have run our neighborhood group for many, many years—I'll just make an advertisement, if anybody would like to take over a safe neighborhood group, we would love to have that happen, but we've been running it for years. We've been the youngest members of that group by many decades for all of those years.

During COVID one thing that I think that I saw, at least with the groups that I interact with, is when we went onto Zoom, we lost participation in the groups, the older people, that were traditionally members, but we gained participation in people that are closer to my age, you know, millennials and such, but then when we went back to in person, we lost those people again. Those millennials aren't coming out in person, so I don't have a great solution to that but I think as you're planning your Dotte University and you're thinking about how to educate people, it's maybe of note, that if you want to get that sort of middle age group, virtually seems to be a way to do that and they did not come back with us when we made that transition back to in person. That's a group that probably could use some of the education because they haven't been in government as long and maybe don't have the background to have that sort of knowledge. So not the young, young people, but not the entirely old people are also I think in need of some attention.

Then, I would say I think that it's a challenging time for you guys to be stepping into this because the other thing we've seen, I think, is just our neighborhood group shrank during COVID and they haven't come back to those original numbers, not just neighborhood groups, almost every group that meets that I participate in, whether it's a neighborhood group or church group or any other kind of group, has not gotten back to its pre-COVID numbers. I think there's just a disinclination to meet that coming out of that period and I think it will be a challenge for you to come up with ideas to try to help everybody overcome that and still have involvement. Maybe it's not meetings, maybe it's a different way involving and educating people, but I appreciate your enthusiasm and I think we needed some new blood to help us sort of move forward from that period because it's certainly a trend that I think that I've seen across the board.

Commissioner Johnson said I do agree with what Commissioner Markley just exhibited or talked about rather. I have had conversations with persons that are younger that have the same amount of passion for their neighborhoods and for the betterment of their neighborhoods, but yet are not involved with the local neighborhood association. I've encouraged them to do so and so, therefore, our neighborhood associations as far as I know in District 4 are usually those that have a lot of baby boomers and some Gen X, but we don't have the millennials. We don't have the Gen Z and X, whatever else comes behind that, so yeah, I'm Gen X as far as I know.

The other thing that I thought was interesting was that on the third to last page, when you talked about involving Livable Neighborhoods and Community Development, one of the things

that my task force is working on is a community benefits ordinance. How do you see—and all these other two points also, incremental development and safe and affordable homes and housing. One of the things that's challenging is to make sure that when we're looking at opportunities for development in the community, that we include the neighborhood association and the NBR and sometimes that also includes CHWC.

I'm interested to see what your thoughts are about being involved in these particular things particularly as we look at this community benefits ordinance. I would love to have you at the table, but I also know that when you involve so many other layers, it kind of boggles down the process when you're talking to developers and time is money and things of that nature. So, I just want to get your thoughts on that.

Ms. Hower said actually the last meeting you had about community benefits agreement that was open, I was able to attend that one, so I think even just looping us in at this point—I don't have any specifics on how best to be involved since we haven't really been involved in those processes, but we have talked with the Rosedale Development Association. They got us looped into your task force or subcommittee that meets about like community benefits agreements.

So, I think in terms of what we need currently is educating us on the process of how to best advocate to and educate other maybe NBRs or neighborhood groups about the benefits of a community benefits agreement or that they could look into expanding their scope of services through incremental development or being in charge of the development in their area with that. I think we could be used as a conduit for communication, education, bringing folks together who might not already be at the table, so that's how I think—**Commissioner Johnson** said ding, ding, ding just went off with the last few comments that you made, so I appreciate that. It makes sure that we keep you involved in that, so thank you.

Commissioner Bynum said Minah had a comment earlier.

Ms. Chapell said I just wanted to go back to a comment you made earlier Commissioner Burroughs about the return on investment. I did want to take this opportunity to advocate a bit for our NBRs. I think that the return on investment that they bring is that they empower and they grow a sense of community and togetherness and provide residents with really a form to express

themselves and also equip them with tools that they need to be more successful and productive and residents in our community. I think the return on investment is miracles. I can give a bunch of examples. LRA, when the baby formula shortage was happening, they were giving out baby formula, they hosted the Leavenworth Road parade. Groundwork does great work helping people remain housed when their home is up for the tax sale. They do great advocacy. RDA has been doing work on the community benefit. I think they do a lot and I think that the money that they receive—in short, they do return on investment, but there isn't a financial tangible outcome if that makes sense and if you're expecting one, I don't think you'll get one because these social services that are impacting individuals and not corporations.

Commissioner Burroughs said you know that's a great advocacy. That truly is and they should be very proud to have somebody at the table giving that back. There are some instances where—I'll be, I don't want to be the bad guy here, but I'm going to bring up a few points about as we had in our previous discussion because I want to be consistent with my message. It was stated that maybe when they ask us to do things we cannot do, then it becomes a political hot potato and I have witnessed personally that some of these neighborhood groups have become politically active against commissioners and that is not what they are established to do. There was one point where I was going to ask that we have Legal look at the documents to put a notice out to be mindful and when you're out calling the Unified Government insensitive, racist and bigot because they're not supporting a certain entity and then you stand before us and request public funds, that is really quite a difficult position as elected officials to understand how it is that you can blast us, criticize us to the extent that it becomes very political to the point where we have to have vehicles, police vehicles parked at our homes when we're done with the meeting is not acceptable practice.

That's, I guess, some of the concerns that I have and we should be mindful that we want our neighborhood groups active, we want to hear how we can help, but the threatening letters, negative phone calls, the animosity that may go towards commissioners because they're struggling with developments on how to make it work and trying to listen to one area of the community and the communities divided on an issue. Some of us can make those decisions, but when we have individuals that we have put in charge of those organizations becoming politically active against commissioners or public officials, I'll just state that, maybe even staff, it really concerns me greatly because I like to think that we are all partners in this process and the more we communicate and

the more transparent we are, that trust gets built. I do appreciate your advocacy and kudos to you for standing up for the organization.

Greg Talkin, Director of Neighborhood Resource Center, said I just want to actually give kudos to staff. Kayla came on six months ago, actually a couple days before the new year I believe. I think her first day on the job might have been a holiday, the way it worked out, but Kayla's came a long ways in six month. I mean she's actually starting to put her fingerprint on this and I'm amazed at the little bit of information we were able to feed Kayla and how she was able to take that and move it forward to the point we're at today, six months later, how much knowledge she has retained and moved forward with.

I also want to mention Minah. Minah has been a breath of fresh air, different thoughts, you know, that she comes across from life experiences. Both of these individuals have great background in education, social areas, something that I'm not an expert in. I'm an engineering background, so I struggle with that stuff sometimes. I just want to give them kudos in their effort tonight, but also where they're at and how short of time they've been here with this organization.

Mayor Gardner said I would like to share with the staff and you know I served 32 years on the Police Department and part of that time I was over Community Policing. I watched early on in my career the value of Livable Neighborhoods and that partnership that it had in cultivating—identifying and cultivating leaders and neighborhood groups that really brought about the change in Wyandotte County in collaboration with Community Policing.

Community Policing was really an instrumental part in that early on in identifying and building those relationships in the neighborhoods and bridging those individuals to Livable Neighborhoods and creating strong neighborhood groups, neighborhood leaders, individuals that cared about not just themselves, but their neighbors. What we saw was a reduction in crime, we saw neighbors cleaning up their neighborhoods be it blight, be it drug houses, abandoned buildings. All that was done collaboratively with Unified Government staff, but it really allowed for the neighborhoods to take ownership of their neighborhoods.

I believe at one time we had well over 100 neighborhood groups, well over 100 neighborhood groups, and they were all active. It was just amazing seeing neighbors helping neighbors. To see that we're down to less than 60 is really disappointing, but I also see it as an

opportunity. I know that Andrea Generaux—I met with her before she left and I didn't know, I was fairly new in my position as Mayor and I just wanted an update on Livable Neighborhoods because I had heard some of the concerns from some of the neighborhood groups and she did, in sharing with what Commissioner Bynum had mentioned, said I'm doing this by myself. I directed the Interim Administrator at the time to fill the position and get the help we needed so we could start rebuilding the Livable Neighborhoods. At least build that foundation from the inside and get the resources there with staff.

As I go out in the community I hear the same complaints. Some from NBRs and one of the NBRs said, you know, it would really be nice Mayor if you were able to facilitate bridging our NBRs and our neighborhood group leaders to our Commission because there is a disconnect. I'm not going to say it's intentional, it's just a disconnect because a lot of people just don't have the time or the access to individuals in this building or access to a lot of elected officials in a way that allows for really robust conversations.

What we've done is, and I know you said quarterly, but every couple months and we started off with Commissioners Bynum and Burroughs, but every month commissioners will have the opportunity to come and meet with, hopefully, the majority of the NBRs as well as the Livable Neighborhood group leaders to start having those conversations on how best to create a safe and livable community and how to rebuild our neighborhood groups. I think that's really powerful and my hope from that also—some of the concerns that I've heard from some of the groups is what you've mentioned.

We need to take a hard look at policy. I don't think it's been reviewed since the 90s and making sure that those policies, those practices and procedures and the expectations, not just for the community groups and NBRs, but also for the Unified Government, that they reflect where we're at today and the values we have for our community. I think that offers another unique opportunity of clarity on reporting on how the money that is there is being spent, maybe some hierarchy NBRs. I've had complaints from certain groups saying if you're an NBR—or does that mean you're an NBR forever. Should there be some type of process annually, maybe every couple years, to evaluate the NBRs and see if they're really meeting the needs of not just the Unified Government, but the neighborhood groups that they sometimes say they represent and allowing the neighbors to have more input in that.

I think those are all great conversations. I think the bottom line is that what I've learned over the years just from being in Community Policing and being here as an employee is that government can't do it all alone and I think most people recognize that we can't. They don't expect us to, but they do expect us to be engaged, to listen, and to meet and I have to quote, "they're reasonable expectations" because some things are just unreasonable, but as we educate them, as we interact with them, as we listen and we try and meet those reasons, that is where the trust is built. Hopefully, through that trust and understanding and mutual respect and mutual partnership that I saw back in the 90s and really up to the early 2000s, I think we can start to grow our neighborhood groups because now they will have confidence in these partnerships and the relationships with their elected officials, with staff, and the Unified Government because they will see progress and they can see things getting done in a way that reflects the needs and values that we can responsibly do in their neighborhoods. Sometimes it's not always about money. Sometimes it's just showing up and supporting good initiatives, good programs, good ideas that a lot of community people have.

I'm glad you mentioned the youth. Even though we have another Youth Advisory Board, we have ProX kids, we have these other youth programs, but it's good that you all are identifying that the youth are key to that because I think that's really key to—I've watched a lot of these neighborhood groups, and I don't mean this in any kind of way, but as some of the neighborhood group leaders have aged and just don't have the ability or they've moved on to really be involved, we're losing these groups with that population. So, somehow we've got to engage our youth and find out where we're at today and what—because I don't know, I'm 54, what worked for me and my generation may not be something that draws that social connectivity of the youth today in 2023, but those are—that is our community. Those are going to be our leaders, those are the individuals we need to engage so Livable Neighborhoods three, four, five years from now we go from 54 down to four and that's a possibility because I'm seeing that nosedive of people really engaged in the neighborhood.

There's a lot of opportunity and I encourage the commissioners as we have those meetings and try and have those every couple months, please take those opportunities. I know the first one we had—I think we've had two so far or did we have one—we may have had one, but they all showed up. All the NBRs and I believe the Livable Neighborhoods Chair or President, they all showed up and they came to the table. They did have a lot of complaints and concerns,

but they also had an openness to move past those challenges to find real solutions to problems and a willingness to want to work with the elected officials and staff because they do love their neighborhoods, they love Wyandotte County, and they love people and that's what's promising to me.

As we continue to this work, thank you to your team Greg and our new leader and the new assistant that's there with her. We appreciate the work that you're doing. I know Andrea Generaux did a lot of work and it is—I can mirror what Mr. Talkin said, you've hit the ground running, both of you, you've done a good job and you've really gotten up to speed in a way that probably would take people two or three years and you've done it in a short period of time with a lot of groups, a lot of people, a lot of challenge in a very positive way. I appreciate you, I appreciate the work that you're doing and I appreciate your vision to continue carrying on the positives that we know the Livable Neighborhoods program has had and can continue to have for Wyandotte County, so thank you so much.

Mayor Garner said that concludes this Special Session and I'll take a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Johnson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Markley, to adjourn. Roll call was taken and there were six "Ayes," Johnson, Kane, Markley, Bynum, Burroughs, McKiernan.

MAYOR GARNER ADJOURNED

THE MEETING AT 6:00 p.m.

Brett Deichler
Unified Government Clerk

dt

June 29, 2023