

Brightmoor Economic Development Focus Group

March 21, 2024

Crowell Recreation Center, 6-7:30 pm

AGENDA

- Welcome + Introduction
- Presentation
 - Project schedule recap
 - Review what residents have shared about economic development to date
 - Discuss the state of Brightmoor's economy and jobs today
- Discussion of potential economic development opportunities
 - Motor City Match program
 - Rezoning on Fenkell
- Wrap up + Next Steps

OVERALL SUMMARY

Meeting participants highlighted a range of opportunities and needs for the Brightmoor community in relation to economic development. Some specific areas of focus were:

- **Motor City Match Program:** Participants in the meeting felt that the Motor City Match program could be an asset to neighborhood business development. Some property owners wanted to list their sites in the Motor City Match database. Residents would also like to be able to understand the progress and schedule of existing Motor City Match projects.
- **Re-Zoning on Fenkell:** Participants in the meeting were interested in re-zoning on Fenkell but would like more time to discuss the options. A Traditional Main Street Overlay is potentially of interest, but residents would like this option to also come with sidewalk and street improvements. Residents would also like to understand the opportunities for “anchor” developments and added public assets. Generally, residents do not want to see industrial or warehouse development on Fenkell.

- **Job Training and Workforce Development:** Trades education and other types of training that lead to well-paying jobs were of major interest to meeting participants. Residents felt that offering these training programs at schools (for students as well as for parents during after-school care hours), or at locations with child care like Crowell Recreation Center, could help reduce barriers and allow more Brightmoor residents to participate.
- **Community Land Trusts and Co-Ops:** This discussion on community ownership methods was deferred to future meetings to allow for adequate time for an overview and community input.
- **Fenkell Business Association:** Fenkell Business Association leadership was present at the meeting and provided refreshments. The FBA would like residents and business owners to know that their entity is up and running and will be continuing to participate and advocate for Brightmoor.

Residents can review the slides and video from the focus group discussion and take the focus group survey (open through 4/19) on the Brightmoor Area Framework Plan webpage [here](#).

DISCUSSION

- **Motor City Match Program:** *Medvis Jackson (DEGC) and Yolanda Massey (Hooked on Books Child Care / Motor City Match Recipient) presented about the program and the opportunities for entrepreneurs.*
 - Q: We have a building, how can we match up with a business that is looking for space?
 - A: Finding the right entrepreneur takes time. Think about what you as the owner can invest in the space and what the appropriate rental rate would be. If the business owner is having to dip into their finances to renovate a building they don't own and will never own, you may need to give them very discounted rent in order for them to want to operate in the space, because they have increased the value of your property and made it easier for another business to lease that space now that the drywall, parking, kitchen, etc. are complete. Be reasonable with a serious and committed tenant who wants to operate in your space.
 - Follow-up Q: We have a commercial kitchen already built so I'm looking for a caterer to lease kitchen space.
 - A: Before you leave, we will put you in contact and on the Motor City Match building track so we can show your building to interested entrepreneurs and list it on our website. We will try

and match entrepreneurs and businesses by zip code. By getting people connected to your property and having them walk through, sometimes people realize this is the space we need to be in.

- Q: I saw a building on the corner of my street and heard someone say it was being built through Motor City Match. Then the building process stopped, and I am wondering what happened or how the program can help.
 - A: Projects always take more time and money than you think they will take. [Motor City Match business owner] noted: it took her two years to finish the project with plumbing, electrical, trees cut down. She ran out of money and had to find more because the building needed a lot of love. You have to do a Phase 1 Environmental Assessment before you purchase to ensure there are no pollution challenges before you buy. Motor City Match goes through an exhaustive list of items with each entrepreneur.
 - Follow up Q: The building has been stopped since the pandemic. Is there a deadline that if the entrepreneur does not finish in three years, will you continue to support them?
 - A: We do have some deadlines and more detailed training programs that explain those. One deadline is that you have to do the first draw of reimbursable money before the first year is up. But we do have a need to extend grace to entrepreneurs in unexpected circumstances as well. I think one question is how residents can get answers about specific projects. We will put you in touch with the Motor City Match team and show the places on the website where you can also access information.
- **Re-Zoning on Fenkell:** *Proposal is to re-zone from Dacosta Street to Pierson Street, goal is to get neighbor feedback on how to re-zone to facilitate new development.*
 - Q: With B4 zoning, are schools and libraries included that can be built under B4? And are we keeping the B4 zoning the same? What kind of anchors are being considered in the zoning area? We don't want manufacturing, we want stores, libraries, and schools that serve the people that are here today, not just new people who come in.
 - A: Schools and libraries are allowed under B4 and would continue to be allowed under a TMSO, for example. What we are discussing right now is what can be built but not what is going to be built.
 - A: What we notice after these plans is that developers come out of the woodwork. Typically they are entrepreneurs in Detroit who have a business idea and see that the neighborhood wants the

type of restaurants and stores they like. We [PDD] don't have input on big public construction projects like schools or libraries. Libraries have their own division and are struggling, so it would be hard to build a new library.

- Q: You're putting all this stuff up here but we have no schools for our kids or libraries now. Do something for the children that are in Brightmoor now.
 - Follow-up Q: Is there anything that would be helpful for kids short of a new school or library?
 - A: Beautify Eliza Howell Park. But we also need new homes to house kids and families who would use the park.
- Q: It is wonderful hearing about the business, but we need new residents to patronize the businesses and get them to stay. Where are we talking about getting residents, building for seniors, affordable homes for young people and children? Otherwise business will fail.
 - A: We've got 4 or 5 options of where we believe residential can go. We are asking people to identify in the Brightmoor Framework Plan survey where they want to see new homes. All our other plans, one of the first things that comes out of the ground afterward is an affordable housing or senior housing development. The Cody Rouge Community Action Alliance is working with CHN to do a wonderful development on Warren, we hope to see something very similar here.
- Q: The golf course between Lahser and 7 Mile Road, what are we doing with it? That was a beautiful golf course. They are talking about putting a cemetery there. We don't need a cemetery, we need places for young people to live.
 - A: The Rogell golf course is becoming a nature park that will bring in bees, wildflowers, and attract nature. In addition, right along 7 Mile, we are putting an RFP out for a developer to see what they want to develop in that area as well. So part of the golf course will be developed and part of it will be a nature park.
- Q: How wide is the right-of-way on Fenkell? If businesses are put right up against the sidewalk, it may not be as wide as Grand River to allow that?
 - A: We want to widen the sidewalk. Fenkell is a state road so it presents some challenges and we will need to work with the state, but the streets focus group is presenting some options on how the right of way can improve, including by widening the sidewalk, or having a small setback for buildings that would enable the wider sidewalk.

- Q: Anchors are buildings or stores, like Meijer is an anchor in Brightmoor right now. Amazon could be an anchor because it's zoned for that, but we don't want that. Also, libraries are not having a hard time, their money has been taken because of tax abatements. With development coming into Brightmoor, what incentives are we thinking about handing out for that development? Because if they get tax abatement, it will dilute the impacts of our community's tax dollars. And because we know that development should not displace, my question is what racial equity toolkit is the planning department using to ensure that development will not displace the residents who are here? Things like that nature park are more for new people and not for those who are here.
 - A: We will make sure that these comments are considered in the final booklet of recommendations and we understand that certain incentives are not desired.
 - Follow-up Q: We don't want an overabundance of development with abatements. I understand we are running out of time. We need to consider another meeting with more time to discuss.
 - A: We can put another meeting on the schedule with all the recommendations that are on the table, and we can have a discussion about each one.
 - Follow-up Q: Question about the City's master plan update.
 - A: The [City] Master Plan update will be starting soon and going for a year and a half. It's like a zoning update but a little more broad to talk about where housing should go, where commercial should go. We will be involving community in that over the next year and a half.
 - Follow-up Q: What about the racial equity toolkit?
 - A: Yes, we will incorporate that.
- Q: We don't want farming, we want homes for young people.
 - Follow-up Q: Some disagreement on not wanting farming from the back of the meeting.
- Q: We need to be able to see proposals before the meetings. We can't come in and be asked to respond that night. We need a schedule of the meetings and to have enough time to get together, look at the recommendations, and be ready to respond. And we need to know how you will publicize and make outreach because there haven't been a lot of voices. We were promised 90 meetings but there have been 30. I'm not sure who has been involved. We need outreach, a schedule, and time to study what is being proposed.
 - A: On May 2 we will come to the community with preliminary recommendations. After that we will set up another meeting to

have a detailed discussion. We were going to end on May 2 but now we are not going to do that. We will publicize using GovDelivery, Department of Neighborhoods, President Pro Tem Tate's office, flyers.

- Q: Can you expound on that, will you provide the details of the recommendations in advance? Things like downzoning need to be discussed in advance, that's a big deal for people with properties on Fenkell who want to get into development.
 - A: Yes, before May 2, we will make sure you have all the information in detail via our website. All the recommendations will be provided. We'll set up a 2-hour meeting and will have food. After we're done with that, we'll set up another meeting to discuss again.

- **President Pro Tem Tate information / discussion:**

- We want to make sure that whatever comes out of this framework will not be put on the shelf.
- We know that there needs to be additional community engagement and are discussing what steps need to be taken to extend this process. We're looking at extending the contract and identifying funding to make sure it's done right.
- Next year is an election year. There might be a new councilmember and a new mayor. If they don't think this plan is what they want to see, they will put it on the shelf, especially if you [the neighborhood] don't believe in it.
- I've worked hard to get funding for this framework, for the improvements at Eliza Howell Park. We're using ARPA money for this and that. This is not us preparing the neighborhood for someone else. This is for you.
- I'm going to do everything I can to make sure this is something that you all believe in. Not everyone will agree with everything. We hear some people don't want farming, but others in the room do. I can show you documentation that lots of other cities are allowing animals, farming, bees. We need to not get stuck in where we were but think about where we can go.
- We need to think about how we improve the human economic development in our community. When we look at the median income of the folks in Brightmoor. If there is an explosion of development, what do you think will happen? We are welcoming gentrification. So what we need to do is work on both the business corridor and on new jobs for people. If we build the corridor for people who are not here, there will be empty storefronts. Developers are not going to want low-income everywhere, but where we stand now, on average we have a very low

income community. So we are working with the City of Detroit to provide training, job opportunities, educational opportunities. And we have not done the best job of providing those in this neighborhood, but that's coming.

- We're going to do this slowly and intentionally, and not for you but with you.

- **Additional Zoning Questions:**

- Q: I have a question about the zoning again, from the secretary of the Fenkell Business Association. My question is about the area from Telegraph to Evergreen. We have quite a few motorcycle clubs that hold a lot of land. They don't really provide a lot of positive benefit to the neighborhood, though they are also not negative. Is there a plan for those motorcycle clubs?

- A: There's no plan but we can engage them. We could sit with them in a room and talk about how they can be better neighbors.

- Q: Can residents provide proposals to develop property, and will they be given higher priority because they are residents?

- A: Always. We are always looking for local entrepreneurs and community organizations to do development, and we have been successful in other Strategic Neighborhood Fund areas making that happen.

- **Job Training and Workforce Development:** *Discussion about what are barriers to accessing existing programs, and what other types of programs people would like to see. What types of programs are needed here in Brightmoor, and how do we help people access programs in Detroit?*

- A: I'm an entrepreneur looking to open a business here in District 1. We definitely need trades education. As an independent contractor, we need programs that help people really learn how to run a business such as systems, networking, outreach, and administrative work. So that should be part of trades education as well. We should also be doing more at the schools, both for kids, but also provide additional resources for parents during after-school care time.

- A: It would be great to see the City partner with more local organizations. The Sienna Literacy Center does amazing work. Also, to piggyback on the grant comment, the Brightmoor Artisan Collective has a program on how to write grants and look for funding, so the City could partner on that.

- A: Training on neighborhood safety and reinforcement of good morals and values. Reinforce parents, or children who are in non-traditional families.

- A: We need people like building inspectors, programs that the City offers to give people good wages in professions like that. We are hiring people from Texas for those opportunities. We need help to get people to be truck owner-operators. We don't want training for low-quality jobs, but for real jobs that can become a career.
- A: When I grew up in the 60s, I could walk to Livernois and it was called the Avenue of Fashion. I could walk down 7 Mile and walk to a theater. In my neighborhood they brought in K Mart and Home Depot but they didn't stay. 7 Mile is a disaster area, unlike when I grew up. I moved to Brightmoor 11 years ago. It has taken 11 years for the City to fix Fenkell by the park. Meijer and some of the other businesses need to be held accountable for the community that they are in. Other Meijers have much more beautification and are clean, people are treated well. Our Meijer charges higher prices than others. What is the City going to do to help bring the neighborhood up, not tear it down?
- **Community Land Trusts and Co-Ops as Community Ownership Models:**
Decision to defer this discussion to another meeting so that we have adequate time to cover the topic.
- **Fenkell Business Association:** FBA provided food for the meeting, many thanks to FBA.
 - FBA represents all businesses along the Fenkell corridor and any potential businesses along the Fenkell corridor. FBA is also focused on the good of Brightmoor as a whole.
- **Wrap Up:** City and DEGC personnel will be around to answer questions after the meeting.

Survey Answers

10 paper handouts were completed at the meeting.

The online form will close on 4/19 and this summary will be updated to add any more answers that were received online.

1. **What questions do you have about the [Motor City Match Program](#)?**
 - Sounds great!
2. **Are there other types of small business resources that you would like to hear more about?**
 - Not at this time
 - Entrepreneurial garden plots for vacant lots. Water catchment systems for the same.

3. Do you have any preference between the following zoning options? Which do you think would help with economic development along Fenkell?

- A. Apply a Traditional Main Street Overlay - **1 vote**
- B. Re-zone to B1 or B2 - **1 vote**
- C. Keep the current B4 zoning - **0 votes**
- D. Other? - **2 votes**
 - o No bike lanes
 - o (the second “other” vote did not write-in further details)

4. What types of beautification strategies do you think would be most effective on Fenkell?

- A. Demolishing vacant buildings that are not historic - **5 votes**
- B. Code enforcement / citing vacant building owners - **4 votes**
- C. Storefront planters and landscaping - **4 votes**
- D. Public art and murals - **2 votes**
- E. Other - **3 votes**
 - o Keeping areas clean from trash etc.
 - o (the 2 “other” votes did not write-in further details)

5. What types of job training programs or educational assistance do you feel are needed in Brightmoor?

- A. Trades education such as plumbing, electrical, welding, carpentry - **10 votes**
- B. IT & technology - **7 votes**
- C. Training to help people move up in their current career - **6 votes**
- D. Affordable access to college courses - **6 votes**
- E. Other
 - o All of the above - **1 vote**

6. How could we best help Brightmoor residents access job training programs that are available today?

- A. Consider child care options - **7 votes**
- B. Consider transportation - **6 votes**
- C. Promote the programs that are available - **5 votes**
- D. Increase relevant training options - **5 votes**

E. Partner with local groups (share who below) - **3 votes**

F. Other - **1 vote**

- Can recreation centers be used for job training [since they provide child care]

7. If you answered "partner with local groups" above - who would you suggest?

- (No answers provided)

8. Would you be interested in hearing more about co-ops or community land trusts, and how they might work in Brightmoor?

- Yes - **6 votes**
- No - **0 votes**
- I'm not sure - **2 votes**

9. Anything else you would like to suggest or share related to economic development in the Brightmoor area?

- Question #5 (job training) is emphasized as a priority
- My home needs repair work. Do you know of any programs I can call that will help me repair my home? Thank you, please call me. *[name and contact information shared in survey removed from this summary for privacy]*