

St. Paul's area Advisory Committee 2021 Annual Report

INTRODUCTION:

The St. Paul's Area Advisory Committee (SPAC) is a 19 member advisory board with a mission to promote leadership and work collaboratively with residents, City Council, the City of Norfolk and Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority (NRHA) on the revitalization of the St. Paul's area. The Advisory Committee is co-chaired by Councilmembers Danica Royster and Paul Riddick. The Advisory Committee will hold ongoing meetings with community members and other stakeholders throughout the transformation effort.

The normal meeting schedule for the Advisory Committee is the third Tuesday of each month from 6-7:30P at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, 232 Chapel St, in downtown Norfolk. In 2021, the majority of the meetings were moved to a virtual platform to comply with safety protocols during the continuing coronavirus pandemic. The SPAC held virtual meetings for 7 months (January-July); did not meet in August; met in person in September and October, and did not hold meetings in November and December of 2021 because of holiday scheduling.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

- SPAC members welcomed Councilwoman Danica Royster as the new Chair after the resignation of Councilwoman Angelia Williams Graves, who was elected as a delegate to the Virginia General Assembly
- SPAC members provided guidance to City and NRHA staff regarding economic equity and inclusion in all phases of the transformation efforts.
- The SPAC created a subcommittee to address increasing gun violence in the St. Paul's area. This subcommittee held weekly meetings to discuss the issue, created and participated in community engagement efforts to hear from residents, and researched best practices from other cities similar to Norfolk on gun violence mitigation efforts. The subcommittee reported its findings to City Council and successfully lobbied to have the City issue an RFP for gun violence mitigation services. The Newark Street Team was selected and implementation will begin in 2022.

- SPAC members consistently encouraged NRHA and City staff to keep “people first”. Meetings were restructured to provide more time to review and make recommendations that directly affect the people impacted by the transformation efforts. This was particularly important in light of the challenges created by the pandemic. The group provided guidance on helping residents deal with covid safety, virtual and in-person learning, health issues, relocation efforts and job training.
- SPAC members received an extensive presentation on the results of year two of the People First, Empowered by USI program. People First works with residents of Tidewater Gardens in the areas of housing stability, education, health and employment. SPAC members provided feedback and direction, particularly in the areas of educational support for children of relocated families, expanding the pool of landlords willing to accept Housing Choice Vouchers, and increasing the number of job skills training programs for residents.
- Many SPAC members actively participated in community activities such as the Tidewater Gardens Asphalt Art project in celebration of Juneteenth and the Summer Blast Block Party. Continuous community engagement is a hallmark of the SPAC.
- SPAC members received regular updates on demolition, new construction and creation of the Blue/Greenway public spaces and provided advice and guidance on amenities and design layout based on community feedback.

Respectfully submitted:
Barbara Hamm Lee, Liaison
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