



The City of NORTH LITTLE ROCK

120 Main St. • North Little Rock, AR 72114
Phone (501) 975-8777 • Fax (501) 975-8633

BERNADETTE GUNN RHODES
Fit 2 Live Coordinator

FROM: Bernadette Gunn Rhodes, City of North Little Rock
TO: Will Reckley, Smart Growth America
CC: Elizabeth Schilling and John Robert Smith, Smart Growth America
DATE: January 13, 2017
RE: Smart Growth America 1-month report

Background

The City of North Little Rock participated in a Smart Growth 101 workshop facilitated by Smart Growth America in April of 2016. The presentation and workshop were attended by a diverse group of approximately 80 stakeholders total. Below is our one-month report to address specific recommendations provided in the Next Steps Memo dated August 5, 2016.

On August 31, 2016, a small group met to discuss the strategies recommended in the Next Steps Memo. The meeting included the neighborhood association president, city engineer, city planner, city director of external affairs, community development director, wellness director, and a Baring Cross/Rockwater developer.

Targeted strategies

1. *Develop collaborative visions for investments in Baring Cross*

Public meetings around Pike Avenue improvements

- The City has \$140,000 in grant funding to do environmental assessment and design for improvements to Pike Avenue, from the roundabout in the south to Pershing Blvd. in the north (more details on specific improvements in Strategy #3). As a part of the design process, the selected engineering firm will conduct multiple public meetings in partnership with the City.

School & neighborhood input regarding new sidewalk placements around schools

- Chris Wilbourn and David Cooke, City engineers, will send neighborhood association president information on which blocks are being considered for sidewalk construction through Safe Routes to School funding. The neighborhood association and school principal will have an opportunity to weigh in before the final decision is made.

Wetlands

- Technical assistance provider Guy Headland with the National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program has reached out to 5th grade Science teachers at Boone Park Elementary in Baring Cross to do wetland planning in partnership with Parks and Recreation.

2. *Support existing homeowners and renters in historic Baring Cross.*

City staff is researching a rental registration program, but has some hurdles to overcome:

- Part of the Baring Cross neighborhood from 16th to 25th Streets is 80% rental.
- When a new landlord applies for a business license, they have to visit the Planning Department first for a zoning certificate. So the city has a record of all landlords.
- Police will red flag homes that have had four or more calls in three months. However, police still have difficulty tracking problem groups as they move from place to place.
- Out of state landlords are a challenge.
- Code Enforcement has only one officer dedicated to rental properties; needs more manpower.

The City and its partners currently offer the following residential self-help opportunities:

- The Office of Community Development offers emergency assistance & home repair grants up to \$5,000 for homeowners at 80% or below the household median income. It also offers grants up to \$2,000 for weatherization projects.
- A group of volunteers, the “Telephone Pioneers,” builds one wheelchair ramp per week. Community Development can provide the construction materials.
- Habitat for Humanity organizes regular “Rock Your Block” events in Baring Cross, where homeowners partner with volunteers to finish important improvement projects in their homes.
- City staff and the Baring Cross Neighborhood Association president, Harlan Hunter, have discussed designating “neighborhood captains” who would be responsible for organizing and supporting residents who want to improve their homes and need some help.

3. Redevelop Pike Avenue to increase walkability and improve access to jobs, goods, and services.

- The City has secured \$140,000 in Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding for the environmental assessment and redesign of Pike Avenue.
- Preliminary plans include a roundabout at Pike and Pershing St., improved intersections including medians, pedestrian refuges, and improved landscaping with street trees in medians and along landscaped buffers between the sidewalk and street.
- Transit will be accommodated with crossings at bus stops between the existing roundabout at the southern terminus of Pike Ave. and its intersection with 18th St.

4. Identify additional locations for neighborhood-serving retail.

and

5. Grow Baring Cross Businesses

- There is support for commercial & residential overlay districts
- There is discussion about the long-term plan for the vacant Kroger building on Pike & Pershing and the soon-to-be vacant Ben E. Keith food distribution center. Finding new owners/tenants for these buildings will be crucial to the vitality of the commercial corridor.
- City staff is working with merchants in the Pike Ave. commercial corridor to explore the establishment of a Pike Avenue Merchants’ Association.