

Buena Vida Choice Neighborhood Plan
Working Group Meeting 2 – Housing and Commercial Development

June 22, 2017

Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville

Included below is a summary of potential strategies and initial project ideas described by participants at the second Working Group Meeting.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Strategy 1: Improve neighborhood safety and livability to attract housing development

1. Code enforcement, inventory of blighted property (especially if city-owned), make it harder to leave vacant
2. Historic tax break within neighborhood
3. HACB/city agreement to purchase and renovate existing homes
4. HACB evaluation and acquisition of vacant property for off-site development within neighborhood
5. Create neighborhood watch group, have neighborhood involved in the process, empower the residents
6. Outreach, programs, education and housing for homeless families
7. Inventory to help inspections for: (1) Vacant Land (2) Abandoned buildings (3) buildings in poor condition/at risk (4) infrastructure at risk
8. Assign a security person for the development for night time or days
9. Reinstate/strengthen the neighborhood/volunteers patrol to work with police in monthly meetings
10. Assign priority lighting corridors (e.g. Polk) to improve, replace, install street lamps
11. Campaign to promote reporting by neighbors and residents to local number (546-help) With specific priority items: (1) Illegal dumping (2) Street lighting that needs repair (3) Abandoned buildings w/suspicious activity

Strategy 2: Develop programs to help owners, renters, and potential buyers

1. Waive impact fees for developers interested in the area
2. More education on homestead and other programs that aren't with taxes
3. Programs to help families with utilities, weatherization program
4. Volunteer program to help people with fixing their homes
5. Review Main Street Downtown Plan, and figure out how Buena Vida can compliment
6. Identify available support programs for residents interested in homeownership in Buena Vida

7. Incentivize/invite public housing residents to info sessions about family self-sufficiency programs
8. Identify support (capital, loans, training) programs for land owners to build or self-construction or repairs
9. Create program for new homeowners interested in “Focus Area Buena Vida”. (With banks and other financial institutions)

Strategy 3: Improve public spaces and neighborhood connections

1. Pedestrian connections on Polk St. to connect homes and International Blvd
2. City to provide guidelines for Buena Vida that encourages walkability
3. Developers should look at not only Buena Vida but also surrounding improvement of infrastructure
4. Work in implementing the design for Greening America’s Communities. Follow through
5. Parking, permit parking for Buena Vida residents
6. Increase street lighting on priority streets that connect to local shops and public spaces/parks (14th/Polk)
7. Inspection program to report stray dogs and identify owners
8. Program with homes to provide low energy/solar saving bulbs and Edelstein Park
9. More frequent street cleaning days by street sweeper (including inside Buena Vida) and announce cleaning days for cars in parking
10. Assign parking spaces for residents and visitors

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Draft Strategy 1: Ensure better promotion and visibility of local businesses

1. Improvement of all streets i.e. sidewalks, bus stops, vegetation, storm water treatment, lighting, signage – accessibility
2. Façade improvement – obligation through code – vacant properties
3. “Minute at the Mic” business promotion
4. Business roundtable/lunch
5. Low hanging fruit – install business kiosk at choice center for printed business information

Draft Strategy 2: Create a healthier business environment within the neighborhood

6. Possible cooperative business model
7. Business/entrepreneur training/mentoring – permitting office, business growth and startup
8. Clear understanding of local support/assistance
9. Possible business association for the Buena Vida neighborhood