HISTORIC GAS PLANT DISTRICT COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

HOSTED BY: MAYOR KENNETH T. WELCH
ST. PETERSBURG, FL
JULY 12-28, 2022
BACKGROUND

• After careful consideration, a new RFP is being issued for the development of the Historic Gas Plant District, formally known as the Tropicana Field site.

• The city desires to ensure proposals reflect the current needs of the St. Petersburg community regarding affordable housing, recreation, hotel and convention space, and jobs, with an intentional focus on equity.

• The city hosted a series of community conversations to solicit public input on development priorities and concerns.

• More information on the Historic Gas Plant District Redevelopment can be found at https://www.stpete.org/residents/current_projects/tropicana_field_site.php
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• What are the community’s/business community’s/youth’s ideas and priorities on housing, business, and job opportunities, recreation, entertainment, youth opportunities, and arts and culture?

• How can components impact environmental sustainability, resilience and transportation?

• How can components honor the history of the Historic Gas Plant District and fulfill past promises?
CITIZEN INPUT ON RFP

• 1,027 citizens provided input* to the City of St. Pete through:
  
  • In-person Community Conversations held at
    • The Center for Health Equity (CHE)
    • SPC Gibbs Campus
    • USF-St. Pete
  
  • In-person conversations with St. Pete youth and the business community
  
  • Online public comment form
  
  • Paper surveys

*Citizen input and comments herein reflect only those of the participants who provided comments via the formats provided. Comments should not be quantified or interpreted beyond the descriptions presented here.
FULFILLING PAST PROMISES

Photo: Foundation for a Healthy St. Pete
Significant support for honoring displaced residents and fulfilling past promises

However, not everyone is clear on promises made to Gas Plant Community

“I have heard Mayor Welch so many times through this process that he wants to fulfill the promises that were made to the gas plant neighborhood residence. But I have not been able to find anywhere that lays out with these promises were. I think publicizing those promises is extremely important so that as we are citizens are giving input we know what those promises are and can make sure that our suggestions are in line with fulfilling those promises. The ousting of the gas plant neighborhood residence was just horrible. And so knowing exactly what promises were made and what the residents, if any are still living, are expecting is very important so that we as citizens can also work to make sure that those promises are fulfilled.” – Citizen Comment
HONORING GAS PLANT RESIDENTS

- African American Museum (Carter G. Woodson)
- Permanent exhibit about the history of the Gas Plant District to commemorate and acknowledge the past
- Plaques, trails, stories in the park
- Memorialize key places within district; location of business and other areas; use QR codes to educate
- Provide grants and scholarship opportunities for descendants
- Enhance African American Heritage Trail; make interactive
FULFILLING PAST PROMISES

- Prioritize displaced individuals/families for housing/ownership and jobs both during construction/development and after completion
- Require % of local residents/impacted residents to be hired – create metric and track
- Provide descendants with jobs
- Require percentage of businesses/homes to be owned by Gas Plant District residents and descendants
- Provide financial assistance to displaced individuals for home/business ownership
- Replace affordable housing, grocery stores, churches, barber shops, etc. in alignment with promises made

“My parents sold their homes in the gas plant district and rented after - not owned- after selling. Past promise of jobs, Tropicana did that, but they were low-income jobs.
- Community Member

“To make good on the broken promises at the Gas Plant District, the city must make a substantial investment in creating permanently affordable housing as part of the site's redevelopment”
FULFILLING PAST PROMISES

• Allow descendants the opportunity to buy back a portion of the land to form a co-op for business development or home ownership
• Land trust for a portion or all of the acreage – ensure land use for home ownership/business for displace families
• Designate a percentage of spaces to Black-owned business
• Remove stadium

“The promise was affordable housing, before the stadium came to light. It was a community and should be a community again.”
- Community Member

“Honoring wouldn't be honored if we keep the stadium there. Pull people in with mixed income housing. Eliminate the stadium and replace with more housing for low-income households.” – Community Member
First Baptist Church- so many churches- everyone felt like they were apart of it. I grew up there. The churches moved to do better. Whatever we put there- I agree-include everybody. If you look at some of these stadiums, if you are of a certain income, you feel bad because you can't afford to participate. I can't see them putting nice places combined with affordable housing-"being realistic"- but that eliminates people from being included. We had social opportunities.

- Community Member
LIVE

Photo: Delmar 745
LIVE – HOUSING COSTS

- Affordability
- Mixed income
- Base housing costs on actual income, not AMI
- Include Section 8 (low-income) and Section 10 (veterans)
- Rent control/rent caps
- Workforce Housing (city employees, teachers, fire, police, hospital staff)

"Truly affordable housing must be the absolute #1 priority. Really look at what people can actually afford." – Community member

“I want to see the city make a commitment and negotiate Municipal permanent affordable housing not developer credits for 5-10 units with millions going out of our pocket for their benefits and then after 10 years the housing goes back to market rate. We as a community need to take care of everyone not the rich and wealthy who do not need it. Housing should be for workers (service, police, fire, teachers, city and county workers etc.) mix used long term.” – Community Member
LIVE - HOUSING CONSIDERATIONS

• Land trust for a portion or all of the total acreage
• Keep all land city-owned
• Address homelessness
• No builder tax credits or short term below-market housing units
• High density
• Social Housing on city-owned land
• Diversity in age, race, ability

“Could a sliding scale % of income be a foundation of affordable housing with a permanent or fixed guaranteed price?”
-Community Member
EQUITABLE JOB AND BUSINESS ACCESS

Photo: Tampa Bay Innovation Center
EQUITABLE JOB AND BUSINESS ACCESS

• Internships/mentorships for youth
• Education and training located in District
• Engage local educational institutions for training and programming
• Gear training to industries in St. Pete
• Childcare for employees and residents
• Local-focused: talent, businesses (not chains), industries
• Small businesses

"Ensure that workforce collaborates with education on job needs and future roles to be developed. This partnership will help fuel the employment pipeline."
– Business Community Member

"Create space needed to fill the demand for St Pete. Focus on the core industries in Grow Smarter and leverage existing community assets to develop a core commercial district."
– Business Community Member
EQUITABLE JOB AND BUSINESS ACCESS

- The business community ranks workforce development the most significant consideration when creating business and workforce opportunities in the Historic Gas Plant District.

- Additional top considerations
  - Honoring past promises
  - Parking and transportation
  - Job quantity and quality
  - Business space and diverse of types

“We need a broad spectrum of commercial and educational spaces. Opportunity for a diverse set of businesses and business owners to build and grow.”

— Business Community Member
VISIT/PLAY

• Multi-use
• Multi-use Convention Center
• Outdoor Performance/Music Venue
• Promenade or Plaza
• Jazz club
• Food truck spaces
• Bowling, Skating, Movie Theater
• Splash Pad and Playground for Kids
• Booker Creek revitalization
VISIT/PLAY

- Greenspace
- Trees/shade/fruit trees
- Walkability
- Bikes/scooters
- Wide sidewalks for strollers
- Connectivity
  - Campbell Park
  - Pinellas Trail
  - Pier
  - USF
  - Roser Park
  - Other downtown areas

“Some kind of green space available with fruit trees, specifically citrus since we live in Florida, and I can’t name a public space in the city with them. Get USF involved with planning and planting the trees. Have St. Petersburg school children plant them as well so they can watch them grow. Create a trail/walking path that connects the area to USFs campus/marina along Booker Creek.”

- Community Member

Photos: Tyler Shaw and Thomas Le
ARTS & CULTURE

Photo: Go To St. Pete
ARTS & CULTURE

• Strong focus on hiring local artists to bring artistry to District
• Incorporate art into the space
  • Murals on freeway overpasses
  • Sculpture garden
  • Soundscape Park
  • Youth participation – paint benches, mosaics
  • Experiential art exhibits
  • Diverse Food Festivals
• Studio space
  • Visual and Audio Arts
  • Performing Arts
  • Culinary Arts
  • Technical (graphics, gaming/coding) arts
  • Interactive, see-through space

“Don't need to start from scratch, we have artist[s] who have already built community 22nd St and Warehouse district, multi-use art center at the center, bridge between what's already there, Deuces to the Gas Plant”
-Community Member

“Our local culture is here because of our artists, and it does not always translate economically.”
-Community Member

Photo: Opal Collection
ARTS & CULTURE

• Include an artist team on the development team
• Art Exhibition space
• Performing Arts Venue
• African American cultural center
• Outdoor arts and performance space
• Utilize art to honor and highlight history of the Gas Plant District
• Space and support for arts and technology careers
• City-sponsored Art Education for all ages; free and discounted to increase access

“Creating art space, display space, gallery space, studio space is very important so that visibility of their work is important, as well as creating outdoor spaces. Most importantly, the space must be affordable.”
-Community Member
ARTS & CULTURE

• Memorials
  • African-American History Museum
  • Incorporate QR codes in educational features for residents and visitors to learn more about where we live, work and play.

• Water Features
  • Fountains
  • Incorporate with Booker Creek

• Sculptures

• Linkages to educational institutions for youth art display

“Bring the arts and culture of the past generation that used to live in that community with murals, preserving historical artifacts”
- Community Member

“Something that accurately recounts and celebrates the history of the area ... what was there in the 60’s...Visual arts for kids, public exhibitions, play, art exhibit. Art in the greenspace...focus around Booker creek...Sculptures/art/ reflect history...link together the cultural attractions around 22nd to the ones that are along the waterfront or the core. Links with Gibbs High to have students display their art.”
- Community Member
“Please require that proposals address the intersection of artistic and innovative practices with private-public planning for community revitalization and neighborhood engagement”
- Community Member
Youth

- Opportunities for entertainment and recreation
  - Sports and Recreation Venue
  - Open recreation fields
  - Skate park
- Scholarship and employment opportunities
- STEM jobs and education opportunities is considered most important by youth for creating job opportunities in the Historic Gas Plant District

When you think about the Tropicana Field area / Historic Gas Plant District, what ONE WORD captures your VISION for the future of the neighborhood?
ENVIRONMENT/SUSTAINABILITY

• LEED certified/Green Technology
• Solar Power
  • Ground
  • Rooftops
• Zero Waste
• Chiller Plant
• Shade Trees
  • Orchard Fruit trees
  • Oak trees
  • Palm trees not heavily supported
• Native plants
• EV buses
• Integrate St. Pete Youth Urban Farm
• Community Gardens (including on rooftops)

“Every building should have a green roof. Every building should be designed sustainably (silver or platinum LEED etc.) If it's not, it doesn't get built. The entire 86 acres should become a tourist destination for people to study examples of what works in sustainable design.”
- Community Member
TRANSPORTATION

Photo: Visit St. Pete/Clearwater
TRANSPORTATION

• No cars
• Walkable
• Bikes, scooters
• Parking garage/no surface parking
• Park and ride to minimize cars in area
• Bus/EV busses
• Water taxi via Booker Creek
• Mass transit/light rail
• Connectivity
  • Regionally
  • Local - airport and other parts of downtown
EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Photo: Foundation for a Healthy St. Pete
EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

• Ages
  • Create opportunities for all generations
  • Separate recreation spaces for generations – youth and seniors
  • Affordable housing for seniors; Senior or Assisted Living Facility, Senior Center, Senior daycare
  • Childcare

• Race/ethnicity/ cultures
  • Development partners and employers should promote and practice diversity
  • Diversity in art and performances
  • Minority business district
  • Cater to various ethnicities in St. Pete: African American, Cambodian, Indian, Mexican,

• Income levels

“Embrace diversity as it's our most valued attribute.”
- Community Member

“A city-run task-force that promotes the diversity of events, more diversity in the city that chooses what attractions/entertainment come to the city”
- Community Member
EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

• LGBTQ

• Abilities
  • Beyond ADA requirements
  • Sound gardens
  • Greenspaces
  • Wide sidewalks for those with mobility issues

“Every contract should require a certain amount of minority and women employees, as well as people that have disabilities and LGBTQ communities.”
- Community Member

“Please include consideration of persons with disabilities in your planning, beyond the ADA, which only provides for very basic accessibility. What is being considered for citizens with mobility, cognitive, emotional and/or mental health issues.”
- Community Member
MIXED SUPPORT: STADIUM

BASEBALL STADIUM

• Mixed feelings about building a new stadium with no commitment from the Rays.
• Some strongly support stadium
• Some strongly disagree with a stadium
• Multi-use fields for other sports/events
• Some support for moving stadium to Al Lang Field

“I think the redevelopment should proceed without a plan for a stadium. Let that be the last consideration because the Rays are here until 2027, period. At the core of the redevelopment is the historic malfeasance that resulted in the current use of the acreage.”
- Community Member

“Please keep the Tampa Bay Rays in downtown St. Petersburg. It won’t be good for a city to lose a Major League Baseball team.”
MIXED SUPPORT: I-175

• Some want to remove I-175 because of the history of how the highway separated the community
• Some want to remove to make area more walkable/bikeable
• Support for maintaining highway for hospital/ambulance transport

“Some believe removing I-175 is necessarily a good idea because at this point what are you connecting it to? There is now a city park, a school and a skate part that pretty much eliminate reconnecting the grid, but you could add more pedestrian and bike paths over the highway allowing better access.”
– Community Member

“I also firmly believe that one of the best ways that we can honor the history of the Gas Plant District is to remove I-175. I-175 was built to separate the black community from downtown, and the only moral thing to do at this point is to remove it. There will never be connectivity between the South side and downtown as long as I-175 stands.”
– Community Member
THANK YOU!

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