

# Park Avenue Faith Community Planning Meeting

## January 24, 2008

### Attending:

Chris Andersen, *1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian congregation member*  
Jodi Cooper, *Mosaic Community Development*  
Jodi Durbin, *King of Kings Lutheran congregation member & local bible study leader*  
Pastor Tom Emmett, *Metropolitan Community Church*  
Christian Gray, *Mosaic Community Development*  
Brittany Hanson, *Mosaic Community Development*  
Pastor Kip Mickelson, *First Baptist Church*  
Fr. Peter Pappas, *St. John's Greek Orthodox Church*  
Heidi Sampson, *neighbor & local bible study leader*  
Dr. Dick Skelley, *First Presbyterian Church*  
Brian Smith, *Coram Deo congregation member*  
Matthew Smith, *Core Community Church*  
Dr. Russell Smith, *University of Nebraska, Omaha*  
Stephen Stout, *Good Neighbor Ministries*  
Bob Toy, *Kings of Kings Church*

### Overview

Members of the faith community in the Park Avenue neighborhood met on January 24, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to come together and share thoughts and ideas about the neighborhood.

The meeting was held at the UNMC Alumni House from 3:30 - 5:30 p.m. The meeting was facilitated and notes were taken for reporting back to participants. Fourteen people participated in the meeting and planning session (list attached).

Russ Smith opened the meeting up with thanks to Brittany Hanson for getting the seed planted and making arrangements. Brittany shared with the group her thankfulness for all coming together. Russ reviewed the agenda and asked for any additions or changes people would like (see attached agenda). Introductions were made, with each person sharing just a bit about a connection they have to the Park Avenue neighborhood, or an event/relationship they feel will help others know their connection to the area.

### Needs

First the group spent some time brainstorming needs of the area. After a couple of passes, time was spent clarifying what was meant by the different needs and how they manifest themselves in the area.

- Safety and security <is crime the #1 need of the area?>
  - Safe streets
  - Fear of crime
  - Perception of crime

- Residents <need more people moving into the area>
  - Development may change things (e.g., Midtown Crossing project; Park Ave. Redevelopment Plan in the works through Destination Midtown)
  - Help people stay in the neighborhood as development occurs
- Comprehensive needs assessment for the area
  - Identify medical and health needs
- Addictions <alcohol, drug, etc.>
- Hunger/food insufficiency
- Day shelter
- Mentoring for youth and persons trying to improve their situation
- Youth activities
- Child care
- Gangs
- Prostitution
- Domestic violence
- Spanish language training for neighborhood organizations and others working in Park Ave. area
- ESL classes for immigrants
- Multi-cultural dialogue
  - Need a venue for community dialogue
  - Need to explore different issues such as finances, behavior (e.g., littering, yard upkeep)
- Skills development
- Spiritual
- Partnerships with local neighborhood associations and other community organizations working in the area
- Transportation
- Help undocumented neighbors with various needs
- Relationships within the faith community
  - All are going through the same thing
  - People relationships/development of strong relationships

## Assets

After discussing area needs, each person was given several notes cards. Each was asked to spend a few minutes reflecting on the assets of the area. After listing them on the cards, each was asked to rank them according to their priority.

The group went around the table and talked a bit about assets. Participants led with their top ranked asset (unless already mentioned). Cards were passed in at the conclusion of the asset review time.

- Historical nature of the Park Ave area and neighborhood
- Hanscom Park
- Believers living in the neighborhood
- Diversity
  - Cultural
  - Socioeconomic

- Business base
- Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous have programs in the neighborhood
- Spanish community desires betterment
- Density of the neighborhood
- Churches
  - Diversity of churches
  - # of churches
- The fact that the faith community is meeting today
  - Prayer
- Family life
- Neighborhood associations in the area that can be worked with
  - Leavenworth
  - Ford Birthsite
  - Park East
  - Field Club
  - Destination Midtown
  - Midtown Business Association
  - Midtown Neighborhood Alliance
- Jackson Elementary
- YWCA
- Food pantries
- Local elected officials are supportive and caring
- Parks in the area (surround the neighborhood)
- Good Neighbor Ministries
- Angels on Wheels
- Salvation Army and Open Door Mission serve people in the area who have needs
- The “time is ripe” for working
  - Great hurt in the hearts of people
- Youth programs
- Together, Inc.
- People’s hopes and desires
- Location of the area; access to transportation arteries and opportunities
- Dignity Cooperative

## **Solution and Action Ideas**

Participants were divided into two small groups: Group 1 and Group 2. Groups met in separate rooms and spent approximately 20 minutes reviewing the need and asset discussions. Ideas were generated on some areas where needs, assets, and participant’s passions intersected.

Each group reported back and shared ideas with the group as a whole.

### **Group 1 Report**

Group 1 focused on hunger and food insufficiency in the Park Ave neighborhood. Although there are some homeless in the area, a major need is also food insufficiency. These needs, along with the need for relational connections, mentoring, and spiritual food point to the usefulness of meals for people.

The format could be a meal time/relational/Gospel presentation.

This has been tried at First Baptist in the past. There is a need, but success would require long-term commitment on the part of volunteers and partners.

Is there an opportunity to partner with churches in the area and across the city for volunteers and financial support?

## **Group 2 Report**

The group talked about their desire to “do a big thing”. This might be something like buying a building to make a community center, etc.

There was some feedback and suggestions that small, incremental steps are important, especially when trying to get support. Also, an umbrella organization might be needed (Mosaic was mentioned).

The group also talked about the need for a big issue or need. Alcohol abuse was mentioned. Homelessness was mentioned. Several wondered what the number of homeless is in the area.

The need to help people at a neutral place; to meet them where they are, just as they are, was also lifted up.

## **Wrap-Up**

It was agreed that the group has just started and needs more time to talk about issues and flesh things out. There are members of the faith community who couldn't make it today and they need to be brought along and included in the next meeting.

Members agreed to personally contact those who couldn't attend in order to catch them up on the day's discussion AND to make sure they will attend the second meeting.

Brittany will coordinate a second meeting, probably at a church in the Park Ave neighborhood.

Russ will type up meeting flip chart notes and get them to Brittany.