

# City brings in outside advisers to address South City issues

Byron Dobson, Tallahassee Democrat 12:24 a.m. EDT May 16, 2015



(Photo: Democrat)

South City, a Tallahassee community besieged by high crime and poor health, housing and employment issues, will be studied this week by a team of experts from the prestigious Urban Land Institute.

The Urban Land Institute is a professional organization recognized as the world's largest organization of members in the commercial and real estate development fields. Its members provide expertise in offering insight into redeveloping communities around the world. For instance, it was tapped by officials in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

Its North Florida Council has 400 members, including about 100 in Tallahassee.

Institute members in Tallahassee suggested bringing a technical assistance panel of experts working under ULI's Building Healthy Places Initiative to the city.

The nine-member group begins its work in Tallahassee on Tuesday with a tour of South City and Tallahassee's south side and meetings with representatives from real estate, public health, planning and economic development staffs, along with child wellness and a South City neighborhood advocate.

Meetings continue on Wednesday and the group's initial observations will be presented to city officials and the public in a forum at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Tallahassee Room at City Hall. A final report for City Commission review will be sent in six weeks. Panelists aren't planning to meet publicly with south side residents during their two-day review, but will take questions at the forum.

"What we want to get out of this is to leverage the power of ULI's global network to get a set of recommendations to facilitate changes in that community," said Chris Edwards, the city's business advocate whose focus has been on Tallahassee's south side.

The city contracted with ULI for \$15,000 to bring this team of outside observers in to add to what commissioners already know from demographic studies, health and crime reports and interviews with residents.

The goal, according to the city, is to:

- Document the current conditions of the South City neighborhood
- Identify long-term goals and objectives for any desired future redevelopment
- Identify short-term objectives that will spur new development consistent with the long-term plan
- Recommend specific strategies for attracting finance and development

City Commissioner Nancy Miller was instrumental in creating the partnership with the institute.

"This City Commission is fortunate to have the assistance of a nationally recognized expert to develop a collective vision for the South City neighborhood and surrounding commercial corridor through a common understanding of issues, opportunities, challenges and steps needed to achieve the vision," Miller said in a release.

South City has become a key target area for the city and county commissions, public health entities, law enforcement and social service agencies.

A considerable amount of time and money has been spent on addressing issues such as high infant mortality rates, unemployment, crime, code enforcement issues, substandard housing and other socio-economic woes.

City officials in March held a community forum that attracted more than 200 people to discuss concerns and solutions for quality of life issues. Last week, the Florida Department of Health, Florida A&M and Florida State universities and the NAACP appointed a citizens task force to prioritize health issues. A citizen's task force on gun violence has identified South City as one of its target areas and is lobbying to introduce a Cure Violence program in the city.

Carolyn Clark, director of the Urban Land Institute's North Florida Council, said the health initiative focus was created about two years ago to connect the

work of those in the building and design fields in establishing healthier communities.

The visiting panel will follow the institute's "Ten Design Principles & Health Outcomes. This includes focusing on healthy recreational activities, access to transportation, improving healthy food options, job creation opportunities and the preservation of a neighborhood's character.

Edwards said the majority of panelists are not from Tallahassee, which allows them to bring an independent perspective about Tallahassee's south side.

ULI doesn't purchase properties and is not in the development business. Its teams volunteer their time and they can't do business as individuals with any city within six months of a visit.

## LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES

Here is a list of local representatives who will be meeting on Tuesday with the Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panel:

•**Real Estate and Business:** Chris Edwards, city of Tallahassee's business advocate; Ed Murray, NAI TALCOR

•**Public Investment:** Wayne Tedder, director, Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department; Michael Parker, city of Tallahassee's director of economic and community development

•**Public Health:** Dr. Joedreka Brown, FSU College of Medicine; Cynthia Harris, FAMU Institute of Public Health

•**Southside Community:** Courtney Atkins, executive director, Whole Child Leon; Torrio Osborne, South City Revitalization Council

## VISITING PANEL MEMBERS

Here are members of the Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panel visiting Tallahassee:

•**Tom Murphy:** Urban Land Institute's Canizaro/Klingbeil Families Chair for Urban Development; senior fellow at ULI, former mayor of Pittsburgh

•**Paul Lewis,** chief planning manager for the city of Orlando

•**Russ Ervin,** architect, ELM, Jacksonville

•**David Powell,** real estate attorney, Hopping Green & Sams, Tallahassee

**Christopher Jones,** vice president of real estate, Renaissance Design Build Group, Jacksonville

•**Wayne Reed,** president of the R-A-M Professional Group, Inc., Jacksonville

**Dale Brill,** consultant, Thinkspot, Tallahassee; former corporate expert in e-Commerce at GM; former president of the Florida Chamber Foundation; chosen in the inaugural class of Fast Company magazine's "Fast 50 Innovators."

•**Dr. Michael Frumkin,** dean of the College of Health and Public Affairs, University of Central Florida, Orlando.

For more information on the institute's healthy communities program, visit <http://uli.org/research/centers-initiatives/building-healthy-places-initiative/>.

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