

RESIDENTS BACK EAST SHERMAN UPGRADES

SURVEYS, COMMENTS TARGET VACANT BUILDINGS, REDEVELOPMENT

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Kim Jolicoeur writes "No Department of Corrections Subsidized Housing" on a board reading "Other Ideas" at the East Sherman Planning Workshop on Thursday Evening. Many city officials and members of the community gathered at the Harding Family Center to discuss the future of East Sherman Avenue

COEUR d'ALENE - After two public workshops, a clearer picture is coming together for plans to revitalize the East Sherman area.

More than 230 people attended the two workshops, which took place at the Coeur d'Alene Public Library and the Harding Family Center, and participated in exercises that will help the city form a collective vision. Community Planning Director Hilary Anderson told The Press Thursday that input from attendees was overwhelmingly positive.

"There was no one that said 'We don't want revitalization.' Everyone is really excited about revitalizing the corridor," Anderson said. "It was really nice to have that reassurance from the community and know that they're on board."

Anderson said close to 300 online surveys have been completed about the revitalization efforts.

Those surveys are available through the end of June and can be found at <https://goo.gl/gx3oZT> (<https://goo.gl/gX3oZT>)

Although a clear and concise report on community input has not been compiled, Anderson said there were some common themes that stuck out to her. The exercise where attendees had the opportunity to place green and red stickers on what they would and wouldn't like to see in East Sherman was particularly striking for the community planner.

"That's where we saw very similar responses at both meetings," Anderson said.

The two things attendees supported the most, according to Anderson, were redeveloping and repurposing vacant buildings and economic incentives.

"Incentives are important and that's obviously something we are going to be looking at," Anderson said, adding that the city will pursue grant opportunities and any other avenue that could help spur economic development in the area.

Affordable housing and services for the city's homeless population were the two choices most often marked with a red sticker. Anderson said that she was surprised to see affordable housing at the bottom of the list.

"I think nationwide, people don't necessarily understand the difference between affordable and subsidized housing," she added. "They oftentimes don't understand that affordable housing is for school teachers, nurses and people in those types of careers."

A lack of support for homeless housing and services was not surprising, Anderson said, primarily because those services have been predominantly located in the area for years.

"I think there's probably some concern about that from the businesses and the residents," Anderson said.

On top of receiving information and ideas, Anderson said there were 40 residents who expressed interest in volunteering, and many others who said they wanted to be kept informed of any developments.

"That's great," Anderson said. "It's really important to have those boots on the ground and the people who are engaged stakeholders to help make it a success."

Throughout the month of July, the city will be analyzing all of the information garnered from the two workshops and the online survey. Anderson said the information will be compiled into a data report that will be available at the end of summer.

"This summer we will also start doing stakeholder interviews and some focus groups to really get their input," Anderson said.