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Input Provides Hope For Apache Park Area

Strong Turnout At Neighborhood Improvement Meeting

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Posted: Friday, October 4, 2013 2:12 pm | Updated: 2:18 pm, Fri Oct 4, 2013.

By TIM O'CONNOR Journal & Topics Reporter

More than 50 people shared positives and negatives of the troubled Apache Park neighborhood in Des Plaines during a community meeting last week.

Residents met with city officials and consultants about improving the neighborhood Thursday, Sept. 26 at St. Stephen Church, 1280 Prospect Ave.

The city is working with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and consultants Teska and Ginkgo Planning and Design to develop a neighborhood plan that would employ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design concepts. The philosophy is that urban planning and effective landscaping can deter crime through improving sight lines and clearly distinguishing public and private lands to make it more likely criminal activity is seen.

The city earlier this year designated \$100,000 of federal Community Block Grant funding to develop the Apache Park neighborhood plan.

Ald. Jim Brookman (5th), whose ward includes the Apache Park area, said discussion last week included interactive exercises for residents. Those in attendance were asked to label the positive qualities of the neighborhood and those aspects that needed attention.

Brookman said there was talk about the need to form town home associations, better security and beautifying the area. He said neighbors also had specific concerns about things like people coming from out of the area to leave mattresses and other waste in local dumpsters.

Positives included the location of the neighborhood and its proximity to nearby Lake Opeka.

“They were very concerned and very involved,” Brookman said of the residents. “They didn’t just stop by to watch.”

Brookman especially latched onto the need for associations, saying that forming the groups would show a commitment by residents to improving the high-crime area.

Consultants will take the data from last week’s meeting and surveys from <http://apacheparkneighborhoodplan.wordpress.com> and a smart phone app to form the details of the plan.

Brookman said he expects another meeting will be held within a few months to report back to residents on all that input.

“My hope is that there’s actual, tangible results that come from this effort,” he said.

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