



Washington Heights Advisory Committee Meeting  
**6:00 pm Wednesday June 8, 2022**  
**Kool Family Community Center/Valentine Room**  
200 W. Michigan Avenue, Battle Creek, Michigan

**WASHINGTON HEIGHTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:**

Lynn Ward Gray, CCLBA Board Liaison  
Jenasia Morris, Ward 2 City Commissioner  
Rochelle Hatcher, District 2 County Commissioner  
Ron Sweet, Vice Chair, NPC2  
Dr. Elishae Johnson, Chair, CCG  
Marcelle Heath, Section 1  
Brigetta Phillips-Freeman, Section 2  
Shirley McKinney, Section 3

Shanay Settles, Section 4  
Aric Vaughn, Section 5  
Dennis McKinley, At-Large  
Arniece Montgomery, At-Large  
Hannah Frentz, At-Large  
Damon Brown, At-Large  
Centhia Fleming, Alternate  
Sherrill Cotton, Alternate

**AGENDA**

**1. Call to Order Roll Call**

Chair Lynn Ward Gray called the meeting to order at 6:24 pm as a Committee of the Whole of the Advisory Committee.

**Roll Call:** Lynn Ward Gray, Ron Sweet, Shirley McKinney, Hannah Frentz, Marcelle Heath, Jenasia Morris, and Dennis McKinley were present. Brigetta Freeman Phillips, Centhia Fleming, and Arniece Montgomery were excused. Rochelle Hatcher, Dr. Elishae Johnson, Shanay Settles, Aric Vaughn, Damon Brown, and Sherrill Cotton were absent.

*Quorum was not established. Jim Dyer, General Counsel provided two options: either cancel the meeting or proceed by calling a meeting of "a Committee of the Whole of the Advisory Committee" to go through the agenda items and make recommendations to the Advisory Committee. The recommendations would not constitute motions but would allow for those in attendance to make their presentations as planned and allow for committee members to ask questions. The committee members in attendance selected option 2 and the meeting proceeded as such.*

**2. Approval of Agenda – Tabled**

**3. Citizen Comment**

Hexxon Villa stated that he was happy to be there and was thankful for the opportunity to present the company's project.

**4. Consent Agenda – Tabled**

- a. Approval of the Minutes – May 11, 2022

**5. Staff Report**

Krista Trout Edwards provided highlights from the Staff Report

- a. Youth Member Representative – *as submitted*
- b. City of Battle Creek Items – *as submitted*
- c. Property Data Information – *as submitted*

**6. Discussion Items**

**a. Case Study #1 - Hexx Design | Van Buren St W**

Amy Rose Robinson presented the case study, including a map of the site, accomplishments, short- and long-term goals, and partnership opportunities.

Mr. Villa provided additional information about their business, Hexx Design, and introduced his partners. He noted that he is a Battle Creek Central High School graduate and has a vested interest in this area. He also stated that they received Washington Heights Entrepreneurial funds for their project.

Ms. Frentz asked about the Family Dollar property as reflected on the map.

Amy Rose Robinson explained that it was vacant and not part of this site or project.

Mr. Heath asked about the project's goal for the lots.

Mr. Villa responded that they would like to clean them up, expand facility with flexible space for other local business including workshops, meetings, or office space. They could rent the space to other businesses. He concluded their first priority is to stop the dumping.

Commissioner Morris asked what obstacles they had encountered during so far.

Mr. Villa responded the cost of insurance for the tree trimmers license for their contractor was very high and to make sure they are not disturbing the neighbors. He said that they are trying to make changes are for the good.

Mr. Heath asked him to clarify which lots they want to build on.

Mr. Villa responded that they are looking to build across the green and orange lots along VanBuren St. He added that they just acquired the corner lot on Michigan Avenue (the northeast corner of Michigan and Hubbard.)

Ms. Gray asked about the business and asked for more information.

Mr. Villa stated they do videography, 3-D printing, embroidery, and use new technology to accomplish this work.

Ms. Frentz asked how long they had been in business.

Mr. Villa said since 2020, and that they started in their home. He added that they are only partially through the build out in their new facility.

Ms. Frentz asked if there are any environmental concerns for the neighbors.

Mr. Villa said that there are not any because their process is all water based and that it is eco-friendly.

Mr. Sweet asked who owns the other corner lot on VanBuren and Hubbard?

Mr. Villa responded the Adventist Village is the owner of that site. He said they are not interested in selling because they have plans to build a storage building for their equipment on that lot.

Ms. Frentz asked about the title of the property Hexx Designs is requesting to purchase and clarification about that process and whether it is affected by the Family Dollar site.

Amy Rose Robinson explained the title work process, as well as the CCLBA's ability to aid with acquiring title as well as with the cost.

Mr. Sweet inquired about the former family Dollar property and the lot across the alley.

Amy Rose Robinson clarified that the last time staff looked at those two sites they were under the same private ownership.

Ms. Gray asked if there are any other questions or comments, hearing none, the committee moved on to the next discussion item.

**b. Case Study #2 - Sunlight Gardens | Kendall St N - Tabled**

**c. Case Study #3 – Washington Heights United Methodist Church (WHUMC) | Greenwood + Moffit**

Commissioner Jenasia Morris shared that she is a member of the Hub of Hope Board that is associated with WHUMC and asked if she could officially be a part of this discussion and the voting process as she felt it could be perceived as a conflict of interest; she felt she should recuse herself from the discussion.

Ms. Trout-Edwards asked for more information about the Hub of Hope Board and how its role in the pilot housing project at WHUMC.

Commissioner Morris said that the Board makes decisions about the pilot project.

Ms. Trout-Edwards said that would be a conflict of interest and that Commissioner Morris should recuse herself from the discussion and from participating in the recommendation.

At this point it was noted that Dennis McKinley, Shirley McKinney, Shanay Settles, and Dr. Elishae Johnson are also members of the Hub of Hope Board.

Ms. Trout-Edwards noted that the same conflict of interest standard would apply to anyone serving on the Hub of Hope Board, and she asked Pastor French to provide her with a list of the Hub of Hope Board members. She then proceeded to present the case study including a map of the site, accomplishments, short- and long-term goals, and partnership opportunities.

Ms. Gray suggested Pastor Monique French share more information about her project before the remaining committee members asked questions.

Pastor French commented that she is excited about the efforts to build the community back up, especially increasing home ownership and getting the community involved. She noted that they are still working on details. She added that she is a resident of this community.

Ms. Gray asked if Pastor French could give a timeline based on a recommendation of approval today.

Pastor French responded WHUMC has been ready and has been having discussions and meetings since last fall. She is ready to do the MOU with CCLBA and is in conversation with other organizations for beautifications and building the community back up. She is interested in rehabbing houses and the rent to own program and empowering people to home ownership. This is based on the initial meeting with residents and the "Think Tank" committee. The church will own the homes until the residents complete their purchase. There will be a wraparound program for home ownership and sustainability through NIBC or Fifth Third Bank. WHUMC is partnered with a collective of landscapers and owners who will work with youth to clean up and beautify some areas in the neighborhood and hope to recover the neighborhood in phases.

Ms. Frentz asked what type of housing is planned, and if it was stand-alone houses or apartments.

Pastor Monique French responded houses, with a rent-to-own component.

Ms. Frentz asked if this was based on feedback from the residents.

Pastor French said that this was initially addressed by residents and the "Think Tank" committee. The "Think Tank" group will be brought back together to address the selection process for placing people in the homes.

Ms. Frentz asked what the Land Bank's role or goal is.

Ms. Trout -Edwards responded that the Land Banks mission is to serve as a catalyst to get properties back on the tax role. But also, in partnership by aiding with clean up, title work, housing designs based on CCLBA program standards and funds availability.

Ms. Frentz asked what happens if residents don't work out.

Pastor French responded the church will own the homes and manage the rent-to-own process until the resident purchases, and that there will be a safety net through the wraparound program providing homeownership training and sustainability to the residents.

Mr. Heath asked if the Land Bank or WHUMC will own the property throughout the process.

Ms. Trout-Edwards said that the CCLBA will own the land during the predevelopment work under the MOU. And if the CCLBA lots are sold through Develop This Lot (DTL) program, they would be transferred to WHUMC, after the due diligence is completed, at fair market value through a purchase agreement just like any other transfer,

Lynn Ward Gray asked if there are any other questions or comments, and hearing none, moved on to next discussion item.

#### 7. New Business

- a. **Discuss and recommend to the CCLBA Board that properties eligible for sale under the *Transform This Home* program be listed for sale with Troxel Realty – *Tabled***
- b. **Discuss and recommend to the CCLBA Board that commercially zoned properties in Section 1 eligible for sale either as direct sales or under the *Develop This Lot* program be listed for sale with Troxel Realty – *Tabled***
- c. **Discuss and recommend to the CCLBA Board the sale of 4720-00-006-0 + 4720-00-005-0 to Hexx Design as a direct sale at Fair Market Value, with assistance on title work and site clearance costs, through Troxel Realty**

*The committee seated voted to recommend approval of this project to the full advisory committee at next meeting.*

- d. **Discuss and recommend to the CCLBA Board the sale of 8870-00-040-0 to Sunlight Gardens as a direct sale at Fair Market Value, with assistance on title work, through Troxel Realty - *Tabled***
- e. **Discuss and recommend to the CCLBA Board entering a Memorandum of Understanding with WHUMC for properties identified by 3900-00-035-0, 3900-00-034-0, 3900-00-033-0, and 3900-00-024-0**

*The committee seated voted to recommend approval of this project to the full advisory committee at next meeting.*

#### 8. Citizen Comment

Pastor French noted her appreciation for allowing WHUMC to come and our project to be briefed and considered. As a part of investment in improving the neighborhood we have replaced slides on the playground, paved the basketball courts and put up new basketball hoops, built an outdoor fitness area and made improvements to our community room which many of our neighbors use for their events. We feed the community on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays. She concluded that improving the neighborhood is a passion for the church.

Bettie Robertson asked about the qualifications for purchasing the lots, and if there was a list of properties.

Ms. Gray stated that this was a time for comment and not responses and that staff would follow up.

Staff provided Ms. Roberston with a list of properties owned by City of Battle Creek and Land Bank.

#### 9. Board Member Comments & Announcements

Dennis McKinley commented about the in-fill housing, and said he is in complete agreement with this effort. He provided historical insight to the property in the Greenwood and Moffit Place noting this was City of Battle Creek owned when the houses were demolished and that a lot of debris and dumping happened on these lots.

City Commissioner Jenasia Morris invited all to come on out to the Cereal Festival on Saturday from 9am – 2pm at Festival Market Square.

Lynn Ward Gray noted that the Land Bank will have a table sharing information at the Juneteenth Family Day on June 18, 2022.

#### 10. Adjournment

Mr. Sweet moved to adjourn the meeting, and Ms. Frentz supported. The motion passed by voice vote, unanimously.

Next Meeting: July 13, 2022, 6:00 pm at Kool Family Community Center