

Fitler Square Civic Partnership 12/19/2019

On Thursday, 12/19, Lindsey Bingaman of Markward Recreation Center convened a meeting of x local groups so that we could get to know each other, learn about each group and work more closely together on our mutual goals of enhancing living and lifestyle issues in Fitler Square.

In attendance were members of the following groups:

1. Markward Advisory Council:
2. Friends of Fitler Square:
3. Friends of Schuylkill River Park:
4. Fitler Square Neighborhood Association:
5. Grey's Ferry Triangles Committee:
6. Center City Residents Association:

This is an important learning opportunity for us, especially as we move forward with strategic planning. One key to our success is knowing what we uniquely do, and do well, and what functions may best be performed (and in fact are being performed) by our collaborators and competitors.

Here is a summary of the groups and their key functionality

- **Markward Advisory Council**

Led by Lindsey Bingaman, she and her cohort have re-invigorated the recreation center by increasing programming, social media, and reaching out to other local groups for collaborative activities. Their board consists of 7 members and their board's mission is to create a space and neighborhood where people feel more socially connected. They are historically connected to Friends of Schuylkill River Park, and are currently exploring re-uniting, to the degree it works for each organization. (note: both are connected to the City and when Dept of Parks united with Dept of Recreation, it eased the two groups' functioning as one). Currently, the two groups meet together bimonthly.

Activities include: Movie nights, pool, mom's meetup, family nights, Tai Chi, community meetings at Markward, playground activities.

- **Friends of Fitler Square**

Changing its name to Friends of Fitler Square Park to distinguish themselves from Fitler Square Neighborhood Association. Their focus is within the perimeter of the park. They get no financial support from the

City, but the park itself is maintained by the City Dept of Parks and Rec. This group pays of the extras, such as annual plantings as well as contracts for services that include lawn mowing and tree and shrub care, gardening, and trash cleanup. Currently, their tool shed was damaged by a tree and they are rebuilding. They have 20 members on their board; 8 are new and there's a new, younger board members now. They want to expand the capability of their board to do social media, etc.

Activities include a Spring Fair, Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Party and Holiday Tree lighting.

They have no website, but they have a Facebook page.

- **Friends of Schuylkill River Park**

SRP has a 5-6 member board which oversees land including the Community Garden, Their focus area includes the tennis courts, basketball court, baseball field and swimming pool, as well as the rec center and the dog runs. They welcome the farmer's market on Wednesdays and help run the after school program for kids. They also plant trees and work with the community garden.

Annual events include the Fall Festival, an adult fair, clean ups and tree plantings.

They are currently involved in a grant funded "Master Plan", which includes a "Proof of Concept" to unite it with Markward Rec. We sent a link to their survey in our e-newsletter.

Membership is \$15-\$20, but their main source of funds are donations.

- **Fitler Square Neighborhood Association:**

Their coverage area is from 22nd St to the Banks, and South St. to Walnut Street. Their mission is to be "a hub". It evolved from the Lombard and Taney Stop sign effort and frustration with the City.

They want to be a resource for residents to facilitate interaction with the City and are developing relationships with city officials, including City Council members. They are advocates for public spaces, such as the pool. Josh Isserman is their leader.

They currently have 6 board members, with some recent turnover. They have no membership dues and are operating on donations. They are operating as a start up and need get insurance, etc. They have 600 people on their listserve. They are interested in helping neighbors create

block parties, and are focused on the pool – trying to get city funds to do a feasibility study for better/more pool use (lighting, infrastructure).

Moving forward

The emphasis of the group right now is to create some type of community calendar, so that we can check to make sure we are not scheduling events on the same night. Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, Feb, 10.

Most of these other groups are cross pollinating, as husbands and wives, in some cases are leaders in one or more organizations. The target audience (with the exception of Friends of Fidler Square Park seems to be young families, with lots of activities for those with children.

When I explained what CCRA did (I used our new Why CCRA), most of the group (there were about 15 group leaders there) had no idea about what we do, in terms of zoning, sidewalk cleaning, bar monitoring,. There was more awareness of our work negotiating with developers. They seemed amenable to helping get the word out about sidewalk cleaning.

Their focus, on the whole, is very different than ours; thus, lots of room to distinguish ourselves. We are much more focused on the private bricks and mortar issues of the neighborhood. Their focus (with the exception of Fidler Square Neighborhood Association) is public space based with a mission of creating a social fabric- neighbors helping neighbors with information, social connections, creating community.

With respect to informing the Strategic Planning process, there seems to be little need or space for creating events targeted to younger families. Alternatively, we are uniquely situated to be the voice of the community with respect to safety, development, maintaining a livable city, zoning, etc.

There also seems to be no group focused on older members of the community, or less traditional families.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Halpern
V.P. Community Outreach
1/7/20