

Housing Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

12:30 PM– 2:00 PM | SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET,
SUITE 100, FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 12:32 PM on September 19, 2023, Jon Romine, facilitator, convened the Housing Branch meeting. The following members were present:

- Gary Griffin, Branch Lead
- Marion Briggs
- Mary Gibbs
- Lee Ford
- Katie Larsen (on behalf of Lee Health) (non-voting)
- Karen Rodriguez
- Becky Guttery (on behalf of Dan O’Berski)
- Diana Giraldo
- Desi Wynter (on behalf of Marcia Davis)
- Amy Yearsley

County Liaison:

- Tim Gillmore

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Jon Romine, Collaboratory
- Tessa Lesage, Collaboratory
- Tracey Phillips, Hagerty Consulting
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Harrison Newton, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Mr. Romine provided an update on the work of the Recovery Task Force and the Recovery and Resilience Planning Process. Ms. Phillips reviewed the process for members and stakeholders to provide feedback on the Initiatives.

Overview of Recent Recovery Task Force Efforts

Mr. Romine provided a summary of the One-on-One meetings with the Recovery Task Force Members and their leadership teams.

Branch Initiative Feedback Summary

Mr. Heere introduced initiative H01: Expedited Permitting. Mr. Romine introduced the feedback summary. Mr. Newton discussed Lee County's feedback for the Initiative. Members suggested that post-disaster permitting processes should be incorporated into the post-disaster response portion of the Planning & Capacity Initiatives. Members discussed the need for an ombudsman to help consumers through the permitting process in various departments. Mr. Ford stated that expediting permits does not always work well and that only those with an ombudsman would help move the permit through quickly. Ms. Gibbs suggested that expediting permitting works well in blue skies and lacks effectiveness in disaster. Members discussed an ombudsman and suggested best practices for consumers and the process of departments working together. Ms. Phillips discussed the structure of the Hurricane Ian Long-term Recovery and Resilience Plan (Plan). Ms. Giraldo stated that these subject matter experts all meet monthly with the building industry and Department of Community Development.

Mr. Romine explained that the second initiative, H02: CDBG-DR Fund Planning, will likely be removed as the Action Plan is a separate process.

The Support Team introduced H03: Regional Coordination and Cooperation and the feedback summary. Mr. Newton described the feedback from Lee County and the technical approach to strategic relationships for coordination.

The Support Team introduced H04: Mixed-Use Overlay and the feedback summary. Mr. Newton described the feedback from Lee County. Members discussed the considerations for and difficulty of implementing form-based codes. Ms. Phillips provided background on the strategic approach of the Plan and the regional approach to jurisdictional-specific problems. Ms. Gibbs stated that in Estero, there are developers who do not want to do mixed-uses. Ms. Gibbs suggested that hybrid form-based codes could be considered. Ms.

Yearsley stated that from the Cape Coral perspective, form-based codes are not feasible. Mr. Ford stated that mixed-use development is the solution and that these housing issues need to be solved to retain the quality of life. Mr. Ford suggested that governments must be connected so that services can be provided. Mr. Newton provided context to prior planning processes in other communities to create momentum with pilot programs. Ms. Giraldo stated that the reason why mixed use is important is because it provides quality of life and thinking creatively can build communities.

The Support Team introduced H05: Elevation and Buyout Program and the feedback summary. Mr. Newton described that educating the community on managed retreat from a disaster-prone area could be considered. Ms. Phillips stated that funding is available for resilience, equity, and nature-based solutions.

The Support Team introduced Initiative H06: Utility Expansion and the feedback summary. Members discussed the consolidation of this Initiative to deal with the long-term challenge of utility expansion in certain areas in Lee County. Ms. Briggs suggested that this could be more important due to the extra costs of new septic tank rules and the direct effect on affordability. Mr. Griffin suggested that utility expansion will provide benefits for the environment and aid in the efforts towards affordable housing. Ms. Phillips stated that initiatives that serve multiple purposes often have the best chances of getting funded. Members discussed that broadband should be included in the conversation with utility expansion.

The Support Team introduced Initiative H07: Repair/Reconstruction program and the feedback summary. Ms. Phillips stated that these programs often have different buckets of funding, and the framework of this Initiative could be guided by the funding bucket identified.

The Support Team introduced H08: Housing Development Program and the feedback summary. Ms. Phillips discussed the consolidation plan for Initiatives related to affordable housing and workforce housing. Mr. Ford asked about how mixed-income housing is included in these Initiatives so that developers can increase the quality of buildings and amenities. Members suggested that mixed-income language should be included in the conversation to enhance and clarify the definition of mixed-use.

The Support Team introduced H09: Housing Finance Programs. Mr. Newton suggested that this Plan could be an opportunity to identify priorities for an update of strategies related to housing.

The Support Team introduced H10: Accessible Outreach, H11: NIMBYism, and H12: Homeownership Counseling. Ms. Phillips suggested these could be combined. Members

discussed communication and outreach to communities to accomplish an affordable housing development strategy. Mr. Ford discussed how the Lee County Housing Authority often accomplishes both and the tool would be the same. The members discussed the importance of the framework of this Initiative for communication, programs, and outreach. Ms. Guttery suggested that from a developer standpoint, public interaction is a different initiative and may not need to be combined. Ms. Phillips discussed the emerging themes and how funding sources could inform the Initiative title alongside consolidation efforts for funding opportunities.

Initiative Consolidation

Mr. Romine introduced the recommended consolidation plan for the Housing Branch Initiatives. The Support Team provided the next steps for Branch members.

Public Comment

Mike Love commented that a weakness of affordable housing is the lack of upward (i.e., social/economic) mobility for those who enter these facilities. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that those entering a home or apartment stay there for a long time. Mixed-income housing allows for that upward mobility. He supported creating mobility and resiliency for low-income families to give people the ability to build resiliency.

Chase Pizaris Henderson commented thanking Branch members and thanked members for their time.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Romine thanked the members for attending and then adjourned the meeting at 1:55 PM.