

Community Advisory Group (CAG)

for the

Omaha Lead Site

Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee
Summary Notes from March 15, 2005 Meeting
Urban League of Nebraska Family Resource Center

Tanya Cook (Governor's Omaha Advisory Council for Lead Safe Neighborhoods), Jonah Deppe (League of Women Voters), Connie Determan (MFG, Inc.), Bob Feild (EPA), Mary Hill (Sisters Together), Patricia Gaines (Urban League of Nebraska), Jennifer Rawley (MFG, Inc.), Reid Steinkraus (Douglas County Health Department), Che Thomson (Lead Safe Omaha Coalition), Marian Todd (City of Omaha), and Vernon Waldren (Douglas/Sarpy Extension) were in attendance.

Ms. Deppe opened the meeting and distributed a table titled, "CAG Comprehensive Plan Components" for discussion. Ms. Deppe asked for comments regarding the table and how it could be expanded in relationship to addressing implementation of the CAG Comprehensive Plan. Reid Steinkraus noted that DCHD's Elimination Plan was included in the State's Elimination Plan. The Subcommittee briefly discussed the State Elimination Plan. The Subcommittee suggested contacting Mr. Todd Falter about the quarterly meetings referred to in the Elimination Plan to determine when meetings were held and if a CAG representative could be invited participate. The Subcommittee agreed to add "EPA" and "City of Omaha" columns to the table. Ms. Todd explained that the City of Omaha's lead plan is included in the City's Consolidated Plan for Housing and Development.

Ms. Deppe stated she would revise the chart to include comments and information shared at the meeting. The revision will be distributed prior the next Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Deppe asked if the Subcommittee would like to set up work groups to address the different comprehensive plan elements, including housing, advocacy, and policy.

Ms. Hill expressed concern about stringent income level requirements, which could preclude individuals who need help with lead-based paint issues from receiving assistance. Ms. Hill suggested that income restrictions consider monthly expenses. Subcommittee members explained that funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development has income restrictions; however, if funds were received from non-governmental agencies, use of the funding would be more flexible.

The Subcommittee discussed issues pertaining to low-income and senior housing, especially concerns that senior citizen and low-income owners would not be able to finance remediating lead based paint hazards. Subcommittee members suggested investigating possible low-interest loans and grants, and possibly utilizing the State's Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Ms. Todd informed the Subcommittee that the City would be applying for a lead-based paint grant soon and would be requesting recommendations from the CAG. Ms. Todd noted that last year the CAG's comprehensive planning was just getting underway, so last year's application did not tie in with specific plans, such as the education plans that are in place now. Ms. Todd stated that connecting the grant with the CAG's plans would create a stronger application this year.

Ms. Todd stated that in support of the grant application, the City is looking for in-kind and cash matches. Subcommittee members suggested identifying corporate matches, asking Mayor Fahey to identify potential private partners, and speaking with Ms. Mary Burns of Great Western Bank. Ms. Todd mentioned that a program like in Leadville, Colorado would allow credit for matching funds at the Omaha Lead Site. Mr. Feild stated that EPA Region 7 would not recognize that program.

It was noted that if the CAG had encouraged our congressional representatives to contact HUD in support of the City's grant application, the outcome may have been better. This brought to the Subcommittee's attention the need for an advocacy group of citizens, noting that the CAG has many government body members that cannot advocate for our causes.

Subcommittee members were provided with a copy of an article regarding a Baltimore lawsuit, which used housing codes to determine negligence by a landlord due to chipping and peeling lead-based paint.

The Subcommittee discussed issues related to code enforcement. Mr. Feild stated that it might be possible for EPA to provide for enforcement of City codes, in order to protect EPA's remedy. Mr. Feild explained that this could be possible if the City or Douglas County entered into an agreement with EPA. Ms. Deppe noted that the City's code should be reviewed to be certain it was satisfactory and noted that the Planning Department had indicated they would be piloting the International Housing Codes, but not the International Codes related to lead-based paint. Ms. Todd indicated that the City accepted the 2000 International Codes. Ms. Deppe explained that currently, homes are inspected in Omaha only in response to a complaint.

Ms. Todd indicated she could provide information on how to access the International Codes for the Subcommittee work group on policy. It was suggested that the Subcommittee look into ways to include and enforce city codes relating to lead-based paint. It was recommended that the policy work group review the City Housing Codes and also the newer International Codes, including the sections pertaining to Lead-Based Paint.

Mr. Steinkraus indicated that he was working with the City to develop a City Ordinance to address lead-based paint. He stated that, at the present time, lead-based paint is addressed by the Health Department under the Nuisance Code. Ms. Deppe asked if Subcommittee members could assist in developing the new ordinance and be invited to review the ordinance prior to the draft being presented to the City Attorney for review.

Ms. Deppe suggested work groups be formed for housing, policy, and advocacy. Subcommittee members interested in participating on a work group should contact Ms. Deppe. The work groups will be announced at the CAG meeting, and other CAG and community members will be invited to participate.

Ms. Deppe mentioned that at the previous subcommittee meeting, Ms. Council had indicated the need to establish a 501(3)(c) agency, which could accept funds to remediate lead-based paint in

and on housing and provide advocacy for residents. Subcommittee members discussed the creating a 501(3)(c) as a new entity or utilizing an existing 501(3)(c) organization. It was clarified that EPA could fund certain activities of a 501(3)(c) or a government agency.

The Subcommittee agreed to invite CAG members to join workgroups at the next CAG meeting on April 6, 2005. The work groups for the Subcommittee on the Comprehensive Plan will include housing, policy, and advocacy. Ms. Deppe indicated that she would work with Ms. Todd to obtain copies of the newest International Codes and the City Housing Codes for the policy and housing work groups to review.

The next Subcommittee meeting will be held on April 7, 2005 at 10:30 a.m. at the Family Resource Center, located at 3040 Lake Street.