Identifying Next Steps and Success/Efficacy Metrics for 2015-2016 Impact Circle Goals

The group began by reviewing the updated, succinct Impact Circle Collective Action Framework containing six community partner-identified goals for the academic year. Each anchor community partner, the Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP) and the Urban Renaissance Center (URC) each contributed three goals.

Mona explained that the goals are somewhat more concrete for URC than BNCP because more UM-Flint faculty and projects were already working in the URC’s Civic Park neighborhood; as we build more relationships in the BNCP neighborhoods this year, many of the BNCP goals focus around exploring opportunities. Tom shared that he liked the broad topics and that starting with “explore” was good, and that when classes are offered will determine what we can accomplish.

Collette talked about the need for building sustainability into the projects so that residents have a role and learn, so that their capacity is built through the projects as well as the students’ capacity and capabilities.

Tom suggested that one metric for success could be how many people per school to involve. Victoria suggested sending the updated Collective Action Framework to the entire university. In terms of communicating and recruiting additional participants, Tom pointed out that it is not always apparent from a list of projects how faculty can contribute. Tracy suggested putting the information in a format to share at the pre-convocation workshop and set up a cloth bag date to announce to the audience then. Videotaping the cloth bag was suggested as a way to share the information with multiple audiences on other days.

The group talked about holding two events early in the Fall 2015 semester before the 2016-2017 class schedule is set by the end of October. The events would be a lunchtime cloth bag event featuring faculty and community partners talking about the projects and the Master Plan connection as well as an evening mixer event for community-engaged faculty to hear a brief introduction to the work followed by unstructured socializing. Perhaps a video of the cloth bag conversation could be playing at the event. Lunchtime could work for Tryphena and Pastor McCathern and evenings might work depending upon the date. Tracy and Mona agreed to meet and plan the events; TCLT could co-sponsor the cloth bag event by providing space for it and working the event into its event series.

The group discussed possible connections to accomplish the goals:

- The BNCP Hasselbring Park project could address amenities, beautification, activities, etc. Tryphena was connecting with the group who recently adopted the park and Vince suggested finding out if they are an official Keep Genesee County Beautiful Adopt-a-Park group (contact Karen West). Collette suggested
involving Ben Gaydos’ Design Studio class and Vince suggested talking with Adam Moore from the City of Flint first about whether there are plans for the park. Mona suggested that after talking with Adam and Karen, perhaps she could convene a meeting with them, the adopt-a-park group representative, Tryphena, Ben, Hasselbring’s community center director, and pastors with churches near the park (Chris Martin and Martez Warren).

- For economic development in BNCP, Collette suggested also engaging existing businesses (not just new ones) to gauge their healthy and support their sustainability so that the region could retain businesses. Tracy suggested connecting with faculty member Amy Gresock for her Strategic Management class and getting on the docket for the Council of Deans meeting. Todd and Vince talked about being careful about how to build relationships with businesses who may be guarded. Tom suggested plugging into student clubs and organizations. Todd pointed out that students in clubs and organizations transition out when they graduate or move on, so it would be good to connect with club advisors who tend to stay, by working with Paul Artale.

- For BNCP blight elimination, Mona discussed that the University Outreach Service Saturday program would be a good fit for supporting the goal. Todd recommended Vicky Dawson’s Building Sustainable Communities class. Victoria said the project could fit with her Winter 2016 class. Tom suggested pitching service-learning as part of a university service and contacting Roy about promoting the opportunity to FYE courses. For example, Elizabeth Collardey will be teaching the “So You Want to Change the World” course in Winter 2016. Tracy and Mona talked about Discovering PLACE as an Outreach program connection and possible art class tie-ins (e.g. painted boards), though care would need to be taken because painted boards signal the presence of blight. Kurt suggested starting with the City of Flint to go through proper channels. He shared that there are creative ways to paint board to protect buildings and create safety, and that we may want to think about stages of history of a house rather than just blighted ones (e.g. those that were at risk of becoming blighted). DeWaun shared that he has experience through AmeriCorps with painting facades around the Dupont/Mackin area. Tom teaches his Historic Preservation class in Winter 2016, which has a focus on preservation technology and could tie with blight elimination by teaching ways to employ the technology to help residents find affordable ways of housing restoration; this would be of interest to Civic Park residents as well. Tom said we need to challenge the faculty to provide the community with tools that they can keep using once the class is over; this should be a goal for all service-learning courses, addressing how the community continues to sustain itself as a result of an intervention (e.g. a service-learning class, research project, etc.).

- For the URC mural/gateway project, Todd’s class in Fall 2015 is already planning to support the mural piece by writing language for grant proposals that the URC can use to secure the funding to hire an artist.

- For the URC Heritage Center project, Tom said the History Department’s oral history internship runs in the summer and includes disseminating oral histories.

- For URC’s Civic Park neighborhood planning, Mona explained that achieving this goal with the City of Flint neighborhood planning toolkit (soon to be released) would help to lay the groundwork for future projects with the university. Victoria shared that she teaches an urban planning class in the winter semester that could fit.

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The group then discussed the need to document both progress and process. Pastor McCathern talked about the importance of documenting for showing the result of multiple years of university engagement. Todd suggested leveraging the university’s ePortfolios as a reservoir to hold documents. Collette suggested setting benchmarks
by month and reporting out what’s been done at the Impact Circle meetings. Todd suggested keeping a written list of what document reflects the outcomes from a given class. Pastor McCathern said to be sure to always go back to the Master Plan as a basis for measurement of outcomes. Tracy suggested figuring out where we want to go and then how to get there, as well as having an Impact Circle faculty member present how they make the classes happen integrally with their classes rather than as an add-on assignment. Tom pointed out that we need to have more senior faculty involved, thinking of department chairs and other senior faculty.

The meeting was adjourned.