Check In: progress of City of Flint task groups and connections with UM-Flint assets

We reviewed the summary of task group progress, which was disseminated at the last Master Plan Implementation Steering Committee Meeting. The groups are generally making progress, each with a core group of active members. Communication and, in some cases, adequate city-wide representation were noted as challenges the task groups face.

Elizabeth Collardey is exploring how her spring 2015 class, *The Urban Context* (SWR 304), will tie with Imagine Flint Master Plan efforts in Civic Park.

Updates

We reviewed the handout of the top 4 strategic priorities that were determined through a campus-wide, Chancellor-led effort to identify where the campus will focus in the remaining 16 months of its 2011-2016 strategic plan. The Impact Circle is waiting to hear the specific strategic initiatives that were selected to carry out the four strategic priorities. Mona shared that the Chancellor agreed to let us know when they are determined.

The Impact Circle followed up on Chancellor Borrego’s request last month that we identify two important, low hanging fruit items to work on, and make progress on the ground, while we continue to refine the Impact Circle’s strategic planning through Spring 2015. In the weeks prior to this meeting, we used a Doodle poll and conversation by email to whittle down the list of potential items to two. Mona shared the email she sent to Dr. Borrego on January 27th with the top two items that we recommend the Chancellor advocate for: 1) commissioning a Target Market Analysis (TMA) housing market study that explore the needs of different faculty/staff/student populations; and 2) institutionalizing campus-wide reporting on UM-Flint community engagement opportunities by beginning to make reporting a requirement through existing channels. Dr. Borrego confirmed that she is in the process of reviewing these recommendations. The group discussed how achieving the second recommended item would get the Master Plan work more on the radar of UM-Flint deans.

RPL 311 Class Project with the Impact Circle

The group reviewed Victoria Morckel’s overview of her RPL 311 projects for Winter 2015, which all relate to the Imagine Flint Master Plan. The class is split into four groups of students who are working on separate projects.

One group is focused on making recommendations to support the Impact Circle’s future development, including by 1) finding connections between the Flint and campus master plans and UM-Flint strategic plan; 2) creating a vision and mission for the Impact Circle and recommend how to move the group forward; and 3) to recommend ways to improve UM-Flint campus place-making to make our campus more accessible/friendly to the Flint community. The group discussed how to integrate three pieces of their project, including tying the first two items
together since the Impact Circle already has a purpose statement and forwarding the Impact Circle is a way to implement connections between the Flint and campus master plans. With two students of the RPL 311 class present, the group reviewed the purpose statement and discussed: what the Impact Circle can do to better achieve its purpose, supports or resources the Impact Circle needs to better achieve its purpose and how mission and vision statements could help the work of the Impact Circle, and what should be included in the statement. Recommendations and comments were:

Kevin pointed out that the task groups are halfway through their process, so there may be an opportunity to bring more people into this effort in the future. The future of the City’s task groups is a bit uncertain, as it is yet to be decided if the groups will end or be renewed.

Kurt recommended that the Impact Circle, with a core group of consistent members, could be a sort of clearinghouse for relationships with neighborhoods as students come and go through different projects.

Victoria said that funding is needed to actually do this work. Faculty will not want to do this work if they have to come up with money to make it happen. We need to incentivize people who aren’t already doing the work. Elizabeth is hoping that UM-Flint will not be the only entity to contribute funding and that our collaborations with the community will allow other entities to contribute.

We discussed that the Impact Circle needs a more clearly defined role (e.g. are we a link to UM-Flint deans, etc.?). To have a clear path forward, we need to better define why we come together as a group and have more direction because the group has discussed different topics related to the Master Plan and our campus engagement with it each time.

We discussed needing to move from an idea to action. Collette said it felt good to have homework between the last and this meeting.

Gary wants to see that others are invested too.

Kevin pointed out that context matters. In Civic Park, you see an influx of groups coming in, but neighborhoods may be leery of outside groups coming in. Few Flint neighborhoods have the level of support that they are seeing in Civic Park. “Sweat equity” needs to be included as a way that neighborhood add value to our collaborations, rather than just bringing money to the table because we want to build relationships with and work in/with historically disinvested neighborhoods.

**Narratives about Flint and UM-Flint Community Engagement**

In the December 2014 meeting with the Chancellor, Dr. Borrego challenged the Impact Circle with identifying narratives that we want the campus and community to start and stop telling. The group created lists of such narratives, and discussed how some are currently factual (real) and others are more aspirational (ideal).

Let’s start saying:

- All lives matter.
- UM-Flint *is* for Flint students.
- UM-Flint and Flint residents deserve the healthy, vibrant city we’re working toward (for the whole city).
- Downtown is safe.
- Change starts with one person.
- You’ll be surprised how great it is here!
- We’re more than a commuter city and campus.
- We are (i.e. UM-Flint is) here and we do care.
You’re welcome here! (UM-Flint events)
Everyone is welcome to come to campus and be part of the campus community.
We will see transformational change through our engagement with community. We will do high-caliber projects to support this change.
We are willing to be civicly engaged in all areas of Flint and we can do so safely.

Let’s stop saying:
UM-Flint is a stepchild of the Ann Arbor campus.
No one on campus and in the community cares and no one is engaged.
Engagement is only for certain academic disciplines.
UM-Flint’s engagement is just self-interested (i.e. driven by research).
We are here to “fix” your problem. (Instead: We’ll work with you.) Let’s stop with the “victory narratives,” or the idea that “We help you. We’re the only experts.”
There’s nothing here in Flint, nothing to offer students other than the University.
Flint isn’t improved enough for people to move here.
Northern Flint isn’t in our backyard. “Don’t go north of Fifth Avenue.”

The meeting was adjourned.