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Development, Planning and Sustainability Committee

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Agency: Cleveland City Council

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Summary

- The committee approved the sale of land to the mixed-income Gordon's Crossing housing project "on the periphery of University Circle."
- The committee approved agreements with JumpStart and the Urban League UBIZ fund focusing on minority-owned entrepreneurs and small businesses in the City of Cleveland.
- The committee approved an ordinance to establish the house of Jesse Owens as a Cleveland landmark.

Follow-Up Questions

- I find it confusing to watch presentations where organizations create their own progress reports about performance on specific metrics. Is it possible for the city to create a simple chart for each organization listing metrics and the quarterly/yearly goals and have the organization provide numbers to fit the chart? I think this would be much easier to follow.
- I see a discrepancy between [the five-year numbers](#) shown by the Urban League in areas such as loan amounts, loans obtained and contracts received (around the 57 minute mark of the meeting), and the overall discussion with the committee. While the numbers all show large increases during the COVID-19 pandemic followed by sharp decreases toward pre-pandemic levels (and with only relatively small increases if 2024 goals are met), the committee discussion was very positive and included phrases like "continuously trending upward" (Hairston) and "productivity numbers just outstanding" (Jones). Am I missing something here?
- On several occasions during the JumpStart presentation, Council Member Jones said that he didn't "feel" the program at work in his ward. What does this mean? Is there a way this could be quantified? Is the program being evaluated on the basis of metrics or feelings? As a viewer it was hard to tell.

Notes

The meeting began shortly after 9:30 am. Committee Chair Anthony Hairston was present along with Committee Members Kerry McCormack, Kris Harsh, Stephanie Howse-Jones and Joe Jones. Council President Blaine Griffin was also in attendance. Vice Chair Jasmine Santana and Committee Member Jenny Spencer were not present; their absences were excused.

Gordon's Crossing housing development

The committee spoke with Community Development Director Alyssa Hernandez about the sale of two parcels of city property at [1848 E. 101st St.](#) and [9910 Woodward Ave.](#) to become part of the Gordon's Crossing housing development. This development would consist of 54 mixed-income apartments (42 two-bedroom and 12 three-bedroom). Construction would start this summer for this project on the "periphery of University Circle" at a "really good location."

Committee members also spoke with developers Sheila Wright and Angela Bennett and expressed approval for the number of affordable housing units in this development. Council President Griffin called the project a "unicorn" when told that 85% of the units would be considered affordable housing.

However, several committee members referred to the difficulties faced by Wright and Bennett in getting this development through City Hall:

- Howse-Jones: "inside and outside City Hall ... people want you to fail."
Howse-Jones also talked about "nastiness, negative energy, people set you up to fail;" "the real behaviors going on in this building must stop."
- Hairston - "fabricated obstacles".

After discussion, the committee approved the land sale for this project.

Urban League UBIZ micro loan fund

The committee spoke with Director of Economic Development Tom McNair and several executives from the Urban League of Greater Cleveland about an agreement with the [UBIZ micro loan fund](#), a project of the Urban League. It provides technical support to minority-owned entrepreneurs and small businesses in the City of Cleveland (this could include one-on-one counseling, financial planning, etc.). The Urban League executives gave a presentation to the council about their 2023 outcomes and 2024 goals.

Noteworthy statistics include:

- 1,920 clients served in 2023 (with a goal of 2,000 for 2024)
- 31 new businesses created in 2023 (with a goal of 35 for 2024)
- \$7.1 million in new loans obtained (with a goal of \$7.5 million for 2024)
- \$23.5 million in contracts received (with a goal of \$30 million for 2024)

After the presentation, committee members made very positive remarks about the UBIZ program regarding both the program outcomes (“continuously trending upward,” according to Hairston and “productivity numbers just outstanding,” according to Jones) and the overall program (“thoroughly, completely impressed,” according to Jones, with Hairston saying, “We believe in you all”). After discussion, the committee approved the agreement.

Agreement with JumpStart

The committee spoke with Economic Development’s McNair and several executives from the [organization JumpStart](#) about entering a \$443,000 agreement with the city. JumpStart provides technical and financial assistance to startups and small businesses throughout northern Ohio.

JumpStart executives said that the organization provided \$1.3 billion in economic impact during 2022. The executives gave a presentation to the committee outlining their goals for 2024, which include:

1. Providing five or more hours of technical assistance to at least 80 Cleveland-related businesses
2. Engaging with at least 40 Hispanic Cleveland-related small businesses, and
3. Deploying at least \$250,000 in small business capital to small businesses

The executives also talked about JumpStart’s [“Small Business. Big Conversations”](#) podcast, where they highlight individuals and small businesses receiving assistance through the organization.

Committee member Jones was told by JumpStart executives that the organization served the entirety of northern Ohio and that the statistics in the presentation didn’t refer to just Cleveland (though the executives told Jones that would provide him Cleveland-specific data).

Jones talked at length about the problems faced by minority-owned businesses in Cleveland (they are “given the run-around”) and the overall lack of East Side

development. Although Jones said the “numbers are very powerful,” he went on to say that he was “not so much sure what you’ve done, seen your boards, but don’t feel your impact.”

JumpStart executives talked about the work they have done in Cleveland neighborhoods and were receptive when Jones said he wanted to “go on the journey with you” in helping entrepreneurs and small businesses. After discussion, the committee approved the agreement.

Jesse Owens House

The committee heard from Cleveland Landmarks Commission staff member Karl Brunjes on an ordinance to make the home of Olympic track-and-field athlete Jesse Owens at [2178 E. 100th St.](#) a Cleveland landmark.

Brunjes gave a short presentation about the life of Owens and his time in Cleveland.

Committee Members Jones and Hairston lamented how Owens was unable to successfully make a life in Cleveland due to persistent racial discrimination and moved to Detroit (and later Chicago) in search of better opportunities.

Council President Griffin stated he was initially reluctant about the ordinance because of potential costs for the current landlord but changed his mind after seeing the support given by the restoration community around possible upgrades to the house should it be named a landmark. After discussion, the committee approved the ordinance.

The meeting adjourned around 11:30 am.

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