

**Tennessee Town NIA General Membership Meeting**  
**6:30 p.m., Monday; November 14, 2022**  
**Buchanan Center, 1195 SW Buchanan**

*The wearing of facial masks will be encouraged for this meeting to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.*

TENTATIVE AGENDA:

- I. Welcome, Distribution of Free Smoke Detectors and Batteries
- II. Recognition: Veterans Day
- III. Community Policing Report: TPD Ofc. Devon Long
- IV. City Council Report: Karen Hiller
- V. Adoption of Agenda (vote)
- VI. Approval of Sep. 12, 2022 General Membership Meeting Minutes (vote; pgs. 2-3 of packet)
- VII. Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports
- VIII. 2023 NIA Goals: Discussion
- IX. Citizen Advisory Council Report: Don Fortin
- X. Old Business:
  - A. 2023-2024 Neighborhood Infrastructure Projects: Alleys, Sidewalks (pgs. 4-5)
  - B. Private-Public Partnership with Stormont Vail, the City of Topeka and GraceMed Update (pgs. 5-6)
  - C. Lane Garden Update (pg. 7)
  - D. Central Topeka Grocery Store Update (pg. 7)
  - E. Property Maintenance Department Concerns (pgs. 7-8)
  - F. 2022 National Night Out (Don Fortin), Basketball Tournament (Sandy Lassiter) Reports
  - G. Fall Neighborhood Cleanup Report
  - H. International Academy Update: Sandy Lassiter
- XI. New Business:
  - A. 2022 Holiday Party in December? (if yes, vote for date and location)
  - B. Hiring of New City Manager (pg. 8)
- XII. Kudos:
  - A. Our New (and Newer) NIA Members/Meeting Attendees/Nextdoor Members
  - B. Happy Thanksgiving!
  - C. Kudos from Attendees
- XIII. Announcements:
  - A. Community Engagement Programs: (1) *Emergency Program*: Intended to help homeowners make repairs to immediate health or safety hazards, (2) *Accessibility Program*: Provides modifications to residential homes for owners or tenants with disabilities, (3) *Property Maintenance Repair Program*: Assists with repairs for low-income homeowners who need repairs to bring their homes up to code and make the home safe, livable, and healthy. All eligible households must have an active property maintenance violation and be on the deed of the property. For more info. or to apply, please call 785-368-3711.
  - B. Computers for Seniors, Free Lawn Mowing: Contact Community Engagement at 785-368-3711.
  - C. TOTO first-time homebuyers' assistance program: The program helps low-income families purchase their first home through HUD funding. The program helps Topeka residents become homeowners by providing education, financing, and home rehabilitation by partnering with Housing and Credit Counseling Inc. For more info., please call 785-234-0217, ext. 317.
  - D. Next Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Mon., Jan. 9, 2023, Buchanan Ctr., 1195 SW Buchanan
- XIV. Adjournment

Tennessee Town on the Internet! Website: <http://tenntownnia.weebly.com> (all NIA meetings, activities posted) ●  
Nextdoor Tennessee Town: [https://tennesseetown.nextdoor.com/news\\_feed/](https://tennesseetown.nextdoor.com/news_feed/) ● E-Mail: [tenntown@yahoo.com](mailto:tenntown@yahoo.com)

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Minutes of Sep. 12, 2022 General Membership Meeting

Attendance: President Michael Bell, Vice President Pat Delapp, Secretary-Treasurer Sandra Lassiter, Donald Fortin, Emma Ray, Rob Cockerham, Zachary Scott, Dr. Valerie Mendoza, Topeka Planning and Development Planner Dan Warner, Topeka Police Dept. Officer Devon Long, and City Council Member Karen Hiller, .

President Bell called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

Presentation: Rob Cockerham for Helping Resident with Home Repairs:

Vice President Pat DeLapp presented NIA resident Rob Cockerham with a certificate of appreciation. Cockerham took it upon himself to help a resident by repairing a roof. Cockerham could not find the right color shingles for the job, so he removed some from another area of the house not so visible to get a better match. He charged not a penny for his help.

Lincoln Street Shootings and Community Policing Report: Topeka Police Department

TPD Ofc. Devon Long gave the report. He said it appeared that the death that resulted from the first shooting was gang related resulting in retaliation for a prior act. Long said a suspect was in custody and that 2 other persons of interest had been identified. He said the second shooting that occurred after the first had resulted in a suspect being identified. Long said that gang activity across the city was not increasing, but it still happens.

He provided the crime stats from Aug. 1, 2022 through Sep. 11. He said that the NIA's stats featured aggravated assaults and burglaries in addition to the 2 shootings. He said those kinds of activities were not representative of the NIA.

Long said he would be attending NIA meetings as the TPD used to do.

Video Presentation: Walking Tour of Tennessee Town's History: Dr. Valerie Mendoza

Dr. Mendoza gave the presentation. Printed information also was distributed to attendees. She said the tour now included the Ice House, in the first 1100 block of SW Buchanan. Mendoza said the tour featured single-family dwellings. There was discussion on whether Lane Chapel Church, at SW 12th and Lane, was for sale and the history page at the NIA's website (<https://tenntownnia.weebly.com/>).

Presentation: "Missing Middle" Affordable Housing Proposal: Dan Warner

Dan Warner gave the presentation. He said the proposal would amend current codes. Warner said the missing middle proposal resulted from the 2020 Topeka Housing Study that showed deficiencies regarding affordable housing choices between single- and traditional multi-family housing. He defined missing middle housing as "smaller, attached housing up to 20 units. Warner said there wasn't a lot of that housing in Topeka.

Warner said Topeka needed more missing middle housing because of increasing single-family housing costs and the aging-in-place challenges of older residents regarding larger single-family houses. He also cited "Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) by design, or smaller units, lower land/building costs per unit, less parking and supplemental income from a 2nd unit." Warner also said more missing middle housing would "increase (the) pool of local 'developers and properties' and focus on 'growth at a neighborhood form/scale (low-rise, 'hidden density')." "

Warner said the trend since the 1960s had been bigger-sized houses. He reviewed in his visual presentation permit and zoning information and housing type by city council district.

Regarding what might happen next, Warner said Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and duplexes are options to address missing middle housing. Those options, he said, provide ways to address smaller lot sizes and increased density. Warner said decreasing parking minimums is a part of the discussions, too.

Warner defined ADUs as including garlows, carriage houses and garage apartments that could be attached or detached from primary housing while being consistent with the architectural designs present in neighborhoods. He cited the garage apartment the Fonzie character had above the Cunningham's garage in the TV show "Happy Days." Warner said ADUs on corner lots could feature 2 entrances, one from each street. Regarding parking, he said Planned Units of Development (PUDs) could feature one-to-one parking and that the access to bus routes could have an impact on the number of required parking spaces.

Adoption of Agenda:

*DeLapp moved adoption of the agenda as presented. Emma Ray seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Approval of May 9, 2022 and July 11, 2022 General Membership Meeting Minutes:

*Ray moved approval of both sets of minutes as presented. DeLapp seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Acceptance of Treasurer's Reports (NIA Support Budget and Free-Will Donations):

*Ray moved acceptance of both sets of reports. DeLapp seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

Fall Neighborhood Cleanup for Late October or Early November 2022:

*Donald Fortin moved that the fall neighborhood cleanup be held from Fri., Oct. 28, 2022 through Sun., Oct. 30, 2022 and that one 40-yard dumpster be placed at the alley entrance of the northwest corner of SW 12th and Clay and one 40-yard dumpster be placed at the alley entrance of 1153 SW Lane. Ray seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

At this point in the meeting Bell indicated that he was having difficulty breathing and asked attendees to agree to adjourn. He pointed out that the vast majority of the rest of the meeting was covered in written materials included in agenda packets.

Attendees agreed to adjourn. An ambulance was called for Bell.

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2023-2024 Neighborhood Infrastructure Projects: Alleys, Sidewalks:

DeLapp and Bell electronically met on Oct. 17 with Topeka Public Works Director Braxton Copley. The alley projects detailed below that were endorsed by his department will be worked into the alley repair rotation. Copley also said his department was working on a new system to evaluate alley repairs. DeLapp provided photos of the alley between Lincoln and Buchanan, from 11th south to Munson, and how it retains water. Copley said his department would take a look at that alley.

2022 DREAMS Neighborhood Consults City of Topeka Project, Funding Recommendations (from Sep. 12):

NIA Infrastructure Projects (DREAMS 2)

Alleys:

Alley between Lincoln and Buchanan, Munson to 12th:

Possible work: Alley repairs and construction - alleys between Lincoln and Buchanan the 2nd 1100 block aligns with the neighborhood plan.

Recommended for approval? Yes

Estimated budget: \$181,280 (Condition of sewer needs to be determined. If sewer condition warrants, sewer needs to be replaced prior to replacement of alley. \$400 per LF for sewer if needs replacements. 515' x \$400=\$206,000).

Alley between Buchanan and Clay, Munson to 12th:

Possible work: Alley repairs and construction - alley behind Asbury-Mt. Olive Church aligns with the neighborhood plan.

Recommended for approval? Yes

Estimated budget: \$176,000 [Sewer was constructed with PVC in 2004 (no need to replace in current project)].

Alley between Lane and Lincoln, 11th to Munson:

Possible work: Remove gravel and pave alley.

Recommended for approval? No. City policy is that no gravel alleys are eligible to be paved. Staff will grade the alley and add gravel as needed. My responses to this determination:

“I wanted to follow up with you regarding our discussions during the recently completed DREAMS public works consult on the unpaved alley between SW Lane and Lincoln Sts., running from SW 11th south to SW Munson. Specifically, I wanted to address the city policy you articulated regarding not paving unpaved alleys.

“That policy is arbitrary and punitive. It is arbitrary because paved but distressed alleys can be torn up and replaced with new alleys while unpaved alleys cannot be paved. Multiple paved but distressed alleys in Tennessee Town over the past 15+ years have been replaced with new alleys. Why can paved but distressed alleys be replaced while unpaved alleys cannot be replaced with paved alleys? It can't be because of costs because the difference between the two alleys, one torn out and repaved and one unpaved, couldn't be enough to justify that.

“That policy is punitive most notably because of the affects it has on the residents who use the alley to access their homes from it. Inclement weather (rain, melted snow) create drainage problems as water collects in the unpaved alley. That creates challenges for those attempting to navigate the alley to get to their homes or simply to pass through.

“The alley in question has been a source of concern for years, yet nothing changes. I am asking that this policy be reviewed and changed to enable the paving of the alley in question.”

And “Here's the challenge I have, Braxton (Copley, Public Works Director). I have to continue to try to explain to Tennessee Town residents generally and particularly those situated along the alley in question why that alley remains the *only unpaved alley in the neighborhood* and that the City *refuses* to do anything about it. All of that has happened as other paved alleys in the neighborhood have been repaved in the past 15-20 years.

“It's completely reasonable for those residents to think that the City's actions here are arbitrary and potentially discriminatory as this alley is located in a low- to moderate-income NIA and given this alley's unique position as the only unpaved alley within the neighborhood.

“This is what happened in Minneapolis in 2008 (<https://www.tcdailyplanet.net/northeast-s-forgotten-alleys-might-finally-be-due-paving/>). I'm not crazy about assessing property owners fees for the unpaved alley replacement as paved alley replacements happen all of the time with funds taken from the City's budget, but the assessments could be spread out over a long period of time so as not to hit property owners too hard.

“It's at least worth considering.”

#### Sidewalks:

Sidewalk repair and construction - including and south of SW Munson (also including Huntoon, Washburn, Lane, Lincoln, Buchanan and Clay St., but not 12th St.) This aligns with planning department.

Possible work: repair or construction.

Recommended for approval: No. The City is already replacing all non-compliant sidewalks in this neighborhood in 2022 as part of the Pedestrian Master Plan sidewalk replacement program.

Sidewalk on north side of Faith Temple Church

Possible work: repair or construction.

Recommended for approval: In process (church is working with public works).

#### Pedestrian Mid-Block Lighting and Signing (from Sep. 12 meeting):

Installation of pedestrian midblock lighting and signage within and including the boundaries of the Tennessee Town NIA.

Possible work: Pedestrian mid-block lighting - this needs to be outlined by the Engineering department in the lighting guidance whether feasible.

Recommended for approval: No. For lighting Evergy is to be contacted and then the electric bill must be paid for by the NIA or the individual property owners requesting lighting. Mid-block signing for pedestrians is not appropriate except in extraordinary situations. Pedestrians are to cross at the cross streets where they are expected to cross by motorists. My response:

“Signing was NOT requested in our DREAMS submission. We were told that mid-block lighting funding might have been available through a previous program implemented in the Historic Old Town NIA. Didn't happen.

“Years ago funding for mid-block lighting had been available through the US Dept. of Energy and the Kansas Dept. of Transportation, but the City of Topeka REFUSED to help us to complete an application for that funding.

“We will continue to seek funding for a project that is NOT about where pedestrians cross the street. It is about the safer passage of pedestrians throughout our neighborhood at night, a precedent already set by the period lighting installed years ago along Washburn and Lane.”

#### Private-Public Partnership with Stormont Vail, the City of Topeka and GraceMed Update:

New Topeka City Manager Stephen Wade, along with Topeka Planning and Development Director Bill Fiander, Community Engagement Director Monique Glaude and Public Works Director Braxton Copley all have committed to providing assistance.

From Sep. 12 meeting:

From Stormont-Vail CEO Robert Kenagy in an email dated Wed, Jul 27 at 4:43 PM:

Mr. Bell,

Your power point is impressive and features Stormont Vail prominently. We have a planning process that results in our strategic plan which includes specific actions we will take to support the mission of the organization.

While it is true that the goals and actions contained within the power point are ones that fit our mission and we are committed to joining with others to address, we have the planning process that will define our participation.

We are in the midst of preparing our strategic plan covering the next three years and are in the midst of a particularly difficult time influenced by COVID and staffing and supply chain issues.

The NIA's proposal is modeled after the "Healthy Neighborhoods, Healthy Families (HNHF)" initiative in Columbus, OH. That initiative is a public-private partnership involving Nationwide Children's Hospital, the City of Columbus and a low-income neighborhood adjacent to the hospital.

Here is the HNHF initiative:

Nationwide Children's Hospital has proudly called the area around our downtown campus home for more than 118 years. So when we announced the Healthy Neighborhoods, Healthy Families (HNHF) initiative in September 2008, it was with a vision and commitment to making a significant, positive difference for our neighbors and our surrounding community.

Modeled after successful revitalization programs across the country, HNHF seeks to remove barriers to the health and well-being of thousands of families in our neighborhood using a multi-pronged approach. HNHF is a public-private collaboration that targets five impact areas: affordable housing, education, health and wellness, community enrichment and economic development.

#### Affordable Housing:

Renovating and selling homes in Columbus' South Side is the goal of Affordable Housing. By addressing vacant and abandoned properties and offering programs like home buyer assistance/education and homeowner grant repair, we can revive the neighborhood. (Opportunity: HCCI, City of Topeka)

#### Health and Wellness:

By improving residents' access to health care coverage, primary care, fresh fruits and vegetables, we are helping to prevent obesity and pre-maturity, while reducing infant mortality rates. (Opportunity: New grocery store)

#### Education:

The creation of mentoring and academic enrichment programs at Livingston Avenue Elementary School, as well as child consultant services to child care centers, will improve early childhood education. Taking it a step further, expanding after school programming to target parents and creating literacy education programs for children and adults will help families, not just children.

#### Safe & Accessible Neighborhoods:

By supporting plans for roadway infrastructure improvements (like sidewalks, bike paths and enhanced green space), the quality and appearance of the neighborhood will improve, not to mention the ease of transportation. Creating both crime prevention programs in the area and personal safety programs, like bike helmet and car seat safety checks, will improve the personal safety of residents.

#### Workforce Development:

By targeting economic development efforts and supporting the Parsons Avenue Vision Plan, we will increase the workforce in Columbus' South Side. We also will increase employment and career fairs for jobs and vendor opportunities at Nationwide Children's Hospital as well as establishing student internship programs for the younger generations.

HNHF has demonstrated noteworthy, tangible outcomes in each of the five areas listed above. Our current success has been fueled through the collaboration of numerous partners including, most notably, the City of Columbus, United Way and Community Development for all People (CD4AP). We thank everyone involved in HNHF's progress to date and look forward to continuing our successful collaboration in the years ahead.

\*\*Please see the public-private partnership proposal being distributed at this meeting.

#### Lane Garden Update (from Sep. 12):

The following points were discussed in a Aug. 19 phone call involving Bell and Shawnee County Parks & Rec Director Tim Laurent:

##### Mowing:

Laurent will prepare 2 memorandums of understanding committing the county to mow Lane Garden.

The MOUs will involve the NIA, the county and the City of Topeka.

Yearly costs to mow Lane Garden and 1194 SW Lane negligible (about \$2,000; Commissioners Cook and Mays have signed off).

Laurent has committed to continue speaking with all 3 commissioners regarding bringing Lane Garden under the county's umbrella.

#### Central Topeka Grocery Store Update:

Through Nov. 13:

- Filmed for a January showing of "Inspiration" on KTWU
- Met with the new City Manager and learned of his concerns and priorities
- Joined by a partner, the Kansas Rural Center, who brought local foods to the Nov. 2 Robinson Middle School Open House as well as the Westminster Harvest Dinner to celebrate the importance of encouraging local growers connecting with the community
- Met with an architect who is an expert in grocery store design and energy efficiency and who wants to work for the development of the store
- Produced a rendering of the store with the work of a CTGO members' son, a Washburn graduate in graphic design
- Continuing to negotiate a lease agreement with GraceMed to build a store at 12th and Washburn
- Made it through the third screening and are recommended to the Topeka City Council for ARPA grant funding to purchase energy efficient equipment for the Central Topeka Grocery (on Nov. 15 city council agenda for approval)
- Contracted with a grocery entrepreneur for a business plan

From the Sep. 12 NIA meeting:

- The Central Topeka Grocery Oasis (CTGO) made it through the first round of applications for ARPA funds to purchase highly energy efficient, no carbon refrigerators so that the store can keep overhead low and pass the energy savings on to lower the cost of food for customers.
- CTGO is hoping to hear from Grace Med soon on the lease agreement we have prepared for them.
- The group is learning about ways to save through financing the construction of the store.
- CTGO will have a table and samples of fresh, locally grown food at the Robinson Open House on November 2.
- The group has three great new board members.

#### Property Maintenance Department Concerns (from Sep. 12):

Below is a PDF of multiple email strings involving myself as the elected Tennessee Town NIA president and various City of Topeka officials regarding the performance of the City's Property Maintenance Department, specifically Property Maintenance Officer Carlos Hernandez and his supervisor, Department Director Mike Haugen.

There has been much discussion recently about a rebranded property maintenance department through the City's efforts to "change the culture" there. Unfortunately, the property maintenance department that has existed for decades takes every criticism personally and defensively lashes out at those who dare to question its service to the people it is supposed to serve. I don't know if discussions on those issues have occurred during the "change the culture" process.

I will let the emails speak for themselves.

NIA website (at the homepage): [tenntownia.weebly.com](http://tenntownia.weebly.com).

#### Hiring of New City Manager (from Sep. 12):

Below is a key issue for Topeka's most challenged neighborhoods that I hope the four city manager finalists consider and take seriously.

Disinvestment in Topeka's low- to moderate-income neighborhoods:

1) We LMI activists used to refer to the Topeka's donut hole, where the historic lack of investment inside the donut has been juxtaposed against investments outside the hole on our city's periphery that have increased, has exacerbated the challenges those neighborhoods within the hole face. As time has passed, however, the donut hole has revealed itself to be a horseshoe of disinvestment, with the open end facing east. Topeka must meaningfully address this challenge ([https://www.cjonline.com/story/news/local/2021/01/30/topeka-east-central-hi-crest-neighborhood-say-investment-has-left-them-behind/6701840002/?utm\\_source=cjonline-Daily%20Briefing&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=daily\\_briefing&utm\\_term=hero](https://www.cjonline.com/story/news/local/2021/01/30/topeka-east-central-hi-crest-neighborhood-say-investment-has-left-them-behind/6701840002/?utm_source=cjonline-Daily%20Briefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily_briefing&utm_term=hero)).

2) All 21 of Topeka's NIAs (Neighborhood Improvement Associations, where at least 51% of residents are at or below 80% of Area Family Income) are inside the horseshoe (<https://s3.amazonaws.com/cot-wp-uploads/wp-content/uploads/neighborhoodrelations/communityengagement/NIAs.pdf>).

3) 1930s-'40s Topeka redlining maps still are largely true and are reflected through today's neighborhood health maps ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5jCZdSdKrM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5jCZdSdKrM)).

4) Our next city manager must prioritize this issue and these areas as they actually present the best areas for investment ([www.strongtowns.org/journal/2017/1/10/poor-neighborhoods-make-the-best-investment](http://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2017/1/10/poor-neighborhoods-make-the-best-investment)).

Please feel free to share this appeal with interested others.

To contact the City of Topeka, please email the city clerk at [cclerk@topeka.org](mailto:cclerk@topeka.org), Mayor Mike Padilla at [mayor@topeka.org](mailto:mayor@topeka.org) and the city council at [council@topeka.org](mailto:council@topeka.org).