

Thank you Diane, Christina, David, City and LCAC commissioners, and everyone else who initiated and helped plan and lead the East Lawrence community meeting regarding the 9th Street project. The meeting was facilitated very well, and is a testament to the City of Lawrence, its political representatives, and staff.

For a bit of explanation on why I care about this project - My wife and I once lived at 946 New Jersey, and still own our home there. I wrote the first creative placemaking grant submitted by the city to the NEA, in partnership with the Lawrence Art Center. I work with almost 70 other participants in creative placemaking in East Lawrence - the development and operations of the nonprofit [Lawrence Creates Makerspace](#), at 9th and New Jersey.

I think the 9th Street project could be good for East Lawrence and the city, if the East Lawrence community is truly a full partner in the process. I believe that all of the City and nonprofit participants have had the best intentions, but that we need a more inclusive process going forward. Judging by last night's meeting, the City has reached the same conclusion.

City staff asked an excellent question last night, "What does full partnership mean?". I believe there are two minimum requirements - the authority to drive the process, and funding.

Regarding *driving the process*, please consider this quote from an 18 year veteran of creative placemaking.

"... if the [existing neighborhood stakeholders](#) – longtime residents, CBOs, small businesses, social services and public agencies who serve them – are not driving the process, community development or revitalization, as it's often characterized by city planners, can also be highly problematic.

Outside interests (developers, real estate agents, corporations, policy makers, or new residents) who do not have long-established roots within an existing neighborhood can end up destroying years of coalition building, networks of trust, and community frameworks that have proven to be successful and integral to the health of the neighborhood and its residents". (Source: [The Gentrification of our Livelihoods: Everything Must Go...](#))

Recommendation 1: In the future, the neighborhood's role in driving the process should start from project conception - not after a grant proposal has been written and submitted. The ELNA should be involved in developing grant proposals that affect the neighborhood, and other stakeholders, including the Lawrence Creates Makerspace, other nonprofits, and East Lawrence businesses should also be invited to participate.

Recommendation 2: We can't turn back the clock, but we should do everything we can to empower ELNA to have the major influence on this project that the East Lawrence community deserves, including approval authority.

Regarding funding - is it truly a full partnership if only three of the four partners have the resources needed to fully participate?

Lawrence Arts Center
City of Lawrence
East Lawrence
Downtown Lawrence Incorporated

Recommendation 3: Please consider that of the four partners, only the East Lawrence Neighborhood Association lacks funds with which to participate in this effort, and solve that problem by providing city funding so the ELNA can fully participate in this project.

Thank you,

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