



West End & Visitation Park Respond to Slight with a Push for Resident-Led Equitable Community Development

Background

The West End & Visitation Park Development Review Committee (DRC) seeks to promote quality, equitable residential and commercial development in the West End & Visitation Park neighborhoods, per the West End Plan.

Overview

A local developer, Vatterott Properties, collaborated with an affiliated nonprofit, the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO), to intentionally work around a community-led planning process, dismissing community voices and reinforcing historic patterns of inequitable development. This practice of marginalization is all too standard to the industry. *The DRC recognizes that the region is at an inflection point where development must be truly intentional, collaborative, and trustable to begin to be restorative, just, and equitable.*

Proposal

In order to build on the initial momentum of early conversations with community partners, the DRC would like to host a series of public meetings with leaders in community development to strengthen residents' capacity to meaningfully participate in development.

- End of September 2021: Defining Equitable Community Development
- End of October 2021: Equipping Community Residents for Meaningful Participation
- November/December 2021: Release of Community Toolkit

Potential topics for the toolkit would include a power map of the development complex, instruction on how to meaningfully engage with regional institutions, and working definitions to demystify community development to laymen.

Timeline

In *October 2020*, Vatterott Properties came before the DRC presenting two projects up for funding, one a renovation and the other new development. Following the presentation the DRC responded only supporting the renovation of existing units at Etzel Place Apartments and requested that the developers not move forward with the construction of new units at this time.

August 2021

Vatterott did not respond. Instead, Vatterott proceeded to collect alternate letters of support from organizations and leaders outside of the neighborhood through SLACO who facilitated the non-West End community support deliberately carving out neighborhood leaders from the process. Vatterott Properties applied for funding through city and state entities under the name of K-M Housing LLC, where they were later awarded \$12.4 million to complete development.

A DRC member notified the full committee in *May 2021* that funding was secured and plans for development were set to move forward without community notification or support. In *June and July*, the DRC began engaging community partners to clarify the position of entities representing the neighborhood.

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