District Advisory Committee (DAC)
Chavez Elementary and El Camino Continuation High School Properties
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 31, 2024 – 4:00 PM

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:
Marco Sanchez
Gema Rodriguez
Sonia Linares
Jennifer Amador
Elizabeth Jaimes
Anthony Armendarez
David Olea
Fernando Salazar
Carlos Barajas
Martha Jauregui
Janet Kang

1. **PRELIMINARY**
   The meeting was called to order by Rob Jacobsen.
   Rob declared that a quorum has been established and that the meeting can continue.
   Rob introduced in attendance City of Norwalk Manager, Jesus Gomez, and supporting staff, Estuardo Santillan, Assistant Superintendent Business Services and Jennifer Sun, Administrative Assistant.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
   Carlos Barajas led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**
   There being no cards from the audience wishing to speak, Rob Jacobsen motioned to move on from the Public Comments section.

4. **RECAP OF MEETING 1**
   Rob Jacobsen stated that there are two charges based on the Resolution passed by the Board of Education (Board): 1.) Do we need the property on Keese Drive in Whittier or should we surplus that property, which is the former home of El Camino High School, and 2.) What priority of uses does the DAC want to recommend for the Chavez Elementary site and for the Keese Drive site. He also advised that the next meeting may include a public hearing for anyone interested to weigh in on what they would like to see done with these properties.

   Sonia Linares wanted to make the DAC aware of a potential grant opportunity that could be obtained through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (Grantor) to help fund turning the Chavez site into a park, though the deadline to submit an application is 5:00 PM today (January 31, 2024). There was discussion on this grant and Sonia noted that the Grantor will be accepting another round of applications in the Summer of 2025 and that there is also the Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program, which is another grant

that is available for the making of new parks and recreation opportunities in California communities. Their 5th round of grants is currently halted but the District could sign up for notifications of when applications are being accepted again.

Rob reiterated the two charges mentioned earlier and discussed the concerns that the DAC talked about last meeting:

a. Community Welfare questions about traffic impacts, crime, open space and walking trails. Elizabeth Jaimes asked for crime data for both areas and Jennifer Amador asked for a one-mile radius rather than just a quarter mile.
b. Declining population
c. Affordable housing and how it's defined. Rob explained that affordable units would be structured to rent to people at 80-100% of median income and that it would not be very low-income housing or homeless housing. For example, Norwalk residents that make $73,000-$109,000 annually, these homes would be available to them at a below market rate.
d. Income streams

Rob asked for a motion to adopt the January 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes. Anthony Armendarez made motion to adopt and Gema Rodriguez seconded the motion. All were in favor of adopting the Minutes.

5. PRESENTATION ON POTENTIAL USES

Rob Jacobsen introduced City of Norwalk Manager, Jesus Gomez, who stated that every property within the City requires to be zoned at a certain level: industrial, commercial, residential (single family), medium or higher density which are more units per acre. Chavez is an R-3 which is the higher of the densities for multi-family. City has control for the zoning, so if you wanted to see higher density than R-3, the City Council Planning Commission would consider that. If you wanted other uses, you'd have to go through the City process to be able to get approvals to have that property zoned differently than it is today. Carlos Barajas asked for a broad overview of the process to re-zone. Mr. Gomez responded stating that once they have identified a project and it's not going to be R-2 or R-1 (you could do R-3 or lower), you would begin the process with the Planning Commission and have a public hearing for a zone change. Zone changes require to then go to the City Council and It could be 30-45 days to wait for that public comment period to pass.

Elizabeth Jaimes asked if Colliers is the only realtor that the District is going to for advice or if there were other options. Rob reminded the DAC that Grapevine Development was present at the last meeting and suggested that they wanted to give a presentation as to what they saw for these properties. Colliers is just a realtor that helped the District through a prior declining enrollment process. Both companies just give their recommendations for best use. The DAC can decide what they'd like to do.

Martha Jauregui asked if the property could be leased, like Costco, to generate revenue. Rob responded stating that there is the possibility to lease or sell, it would depend on the use. For single-family homes, the developer is going to want to buy the property because people are going to want to buy their homes. Apartments or other uses could be a long-term lease.

Gema Rodriguez asked if rental units would be the only option or if it is what the DAC decides. Rob responded stating that the one realtor that presented just said that it might be the highest economic use. Anything is on the table in terms of recommendations.

Fernando Salazar asked if hospitals were a possibility. David Olea responded stating that there would have to be an interest for a hospital. He continued to comment that these properties are either going to be housing or some sort of community-based property. It's unknown if businesses would want to put businesses there. Jennifer Amador asked for information on how businesses are doing in this area stating that this information might help to determine what would be successful for the Chavez area. Rob asked if there was interest in retail or other businesses. Jennifer said that she loved the idea of a track and using it for the community but also wanted to look at what could bring funding into the District. Gema commented that some mixed-use is a great idea and could increase the walkability of the City. Anthony Armendarez made comment that since there is an issue with crime in the area, if mixed-use, a sheriff's or public safety office might be an idea for visibility in the area.

David stated that he'd like to lease the property and bring revenue to the District. Sonia Linares asked if the District has any sense of urgency, financially, to develop these properties? Estuardo Santillan stated that even though the properties are not being utilized for students right now, as vacant properties, they still need to be maintained. Anthony asked if the District were lease the property out for low income housing, how much say would the District have once it's leased out and already built. Rob answered stating the District would have some control via the lease agreements. The DAC asked for a cost analysis to maintain the vacant properties. Estuardo stated that in total, the District estimated Chavez to be $136,000 per year and for El Camino, around $75,000. The breakdown is for gas, electricity, water, and grounds maintenance. Jennifer asked about the big difference in the cost for upkeep between the two properties. Estuardo stated that El Camino is basically empty with no traffic of human beings. The District has a few programs at Chavez and a few offices which account for the difference in cost.

Gema asked if there was an answer to the historical significance of the Auditorium at Chavez. Rob replied stating that he does not have an answer on that. David commented about the City's lack of exposure to performing arts. Other cities have performing arts centers and that's one of the things that Norwalk doesn't have. Whether it's shared between the City and the District, we have this property with an old auditorium that could be utilized. We need to make good decisions here as a DAC so that in the future, if we ever go back to our residents for a bond, they'd be willing to support our District.

6. DAC DISCUSSION TO ESTABLISH A PRIORITY LIST OF POTENTIAL USES

Rob Jacobsen suggested that the DAC start creating a priority of uses by consensus and that maybe at the next meeting the community can weigh in on those rankings during the public hearing.

To be sure that a business brings in revenue and not sit vacant, Martha Jauregui asked Jesus Gomez, City Manager, why there's a lot of vacant businesses in the City of Norwalk and if he foresees bringing business into the community. Mr. Gomez used Costco as an example. It's District property, it's leased, and it's a business that does extremely well. There are vacant properties in the City, and after looking into why, as it turns out, rents are high. The Walmart that closed is now going to be a Tesla dealership. It takes time to recruit businesses. The City

has been marketing the Food4Less property but finding the right developer with the right mix of businesses that will do well there takes time. Food4Less left because of high rent. The City is a high demand city and a high rent city for commercial properties. Sonia Linares asked if high rent would affect the ability to rezone for businesses. Elizabeth Jaimes asked if there were a possibility that the District could indicate in an agreement that certain amounts of rent be charged, or an agreement in that the District will lower the developer's lease, if the developer lowers their rent to keep business booming.

Gema Rodriguez stated that she would like to lease the Chavez property so that the District keeps it as an asset. Carlos Barajas stated that he believes the proposal needs to be safe community use that will bring traffic such as a community center with a sheriff's post, an art center or a banquet/wedding facility. If it's safe, businesses will want to do business in the area. Members discussed this idea relating it to areas in other cities.

David Olea asked Mr. Gomez about housing projects in the works. Mr. Gomez responded stating that the City has 1,200 units that have been either approved or ready to be approved: 213 apartment units at the former indoor swap meet, 350 units at the Entertainment District/Civic Center and the City is releasing environmental impact report for 707 units at the California Youth Authority that is a large mix of market rate apartments and affordable apartment housing.

Jennifer Amador mentioned that she likes the idea of leasing but she also likes the idea and would be proud of having a community area such as a park with a track and exercise machines, a performing arts center mixed in there as well with other options that would really better the community and bring attention to the City and the District. She asked Mr. Gomez if having a sheriff's office was a possibility. Mr. Gomez responded stating that it could be possible but who would pay for it, the developer, the District or the City? He stated that the City had tried this concept and it didn't really work out because they'd rather be out patrolling than in an office. Patrol is a key component to the City's public safety approach to community policing. Members discussed public safety and community policing.

Anthony Armendarez suggested turning the site into a performing arts school itself.

Marco Sanchez commented that it's very popular to see apartment complexes with businesses on the ground level. If the DAC is going the route of mixed use with retail and housing, that would be something to consider. Members discussed this idea.

Based on show of hands the following options are on the table for Chavez: lease, mixed use to include a park/open space/community center, performing arts center, and mixed use to include retail/housing.

Rob noted that higher density could be leased and would likely be market rate apartments. Gema commented that she feels there is a need for affordable housing and suggested some affordable and some market rate housing. Sonia asked if the District could specify that they want some green area in the lease for walkability and to make the area more accessible. Rob confirmed affirmatively. Carlos asked if the District would be able to lease it to an organization that helps build community, such as YMCA. Rob affirmed and mentioned that it sounds like the DAC is wanting some retail, some housing, some affordable housing, some park/open space, and community resource center in the space.

Martha asked how many developers/realtors are being considered. Rob stated he isn't aware of any developers/realtors inquiring about Chavez and that the District would seeks bids for a realtor and developer. The Board would then choose. She mentioned that she knows a certain Board member is a realtor and asked if he would have input on the final decision. Rob stated that Board President, Jose Rios, is a realtor by profession and that he has indicated in the past that the District give different realtors the opportunity to bid for the work.

There was some discussion regarding the auditorium at Chavez and David Olea asked if there has ever been a time where a school district and a city have come together on a project like a performing arts center. Rob responded stating that there are joint use agreements that can be collaborations between a school district and a city. Martha asked when was the last time the auditorium was utilized. Estuardo Santillan responded stating that it hasn't been used for anything other than a small warehouse in years. He said that the Chavez auditorium is almost like a junior version of Excelsior auditorium from the 40's and 50's and would require significant funding to bring it up to code. Gema asked if the entire 8.3 acres had to be leased or could the auditorium be used as a joint partnership for community use and issue a bond for funds. Rob stated that bonds are possible to try and improve the site and that the voters would have to approve it. As far as having to lease the whole site, he noted you can parcel out the site and have it become multiple developments.

Rob confirmed with the DAC that there is one preferred use with multiple subparts and shared that a public hearing may be held for community input on the DAC's proposed use and that people would come in and offer their opinions. Marco Sanchez commented that he thinks all of the ideas are great but it's also important to keep in mind the cost of these ideas. This is an asset for the District and we are here to serve the students that are with us now. He requested that when the DAC informs the community of the ideas, that they're also aware of the potential cost associated with them.

Rob suggested the DAC move on to the Keese Drive property (El Camino). Martha proposed the sale of this property for homes and Sonia agreed. David asked if this site could be leased for higher density housing, stating that if we could lease apartments, the District would still be able to hold onto the property and bring a revenue stream. Members discussed zoning and the site being located in unincorporated Whittier and school district boundaries. Rob confirmed that the 11 acres where El Camino was, if developed, those would be Norwalk-La Mirada students.

Rob summarized the DAC's options for preferable uses: sell for single family homes/townhomes, and lease for higher density apartments and advised that if a developer wanted to build apartments, they may not bid the same for leasing versus buying. David mentioned that maybe lease for luxury apartments where we could still lease but appease the surrounding area with not multiple apartments but bigger, luxury apartments.

Rob asked what information is needed to help the DAC prioritize uses. Sonia stated she would like to have more information about the process of going through the LA County Board of Supervisors, how long it would take to approve plans, and the circumstances if people in the neighborhood were to push back. How much would it cost the District to delay plans that were already approved. Gema commented on California's housing shortage and asked for Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) data and Sonia added that she'd like to know if the property would fall under City requirements for Whittier or if it would be County because it's unincorporated. David asked to talk with a realtor regarding zoning and the potential of leasing

rather than selling. Sonia asked if anything other than single family homes was proposed, how much longer would it take to rezone. Marco asked for confirmation that a variance would be required to rezone for a park for the Norwalk property as well. Rob responded that it would be downzoning for open space. Liz asked if the timeline to downzone would be the same and Mr. Gomez confirmed affirmatively. Sonia asked about the cost to rezone an area and if the District would be paying that or the developer. Rob responded stating that it would be the developer and added that they would factor that into their bid.

7. NEXT MEETING

Rob noted we have consensus of what the DAC would like to be done for Chavez and that for Keese, there are two options of sale for single family homes/townhomes and lease. He advised a public hearing may happen so that the DAC could get public thoughts to consider and then the DAC would prepare a report of what the recommendations are.

Next meeting is February 21, 2024.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Rob Jacobsen adjourned the meeting at 5:53 PM.