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HJC Policy and Poli. Ed. Newsletter - 6/18/21

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Mon, Jun 21, 2021 at 1:24 PM

To: Housing Rights Education Group <housing-rights-education-group@googlegroups.com>

Hello All,

We are in the 11th hour before the vote on the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Of course, it wouldn't be the 11th Hour without some last minute excitement.

Last Thursday, Councilmember Tariq Bokhari in a [tweet thread](#) demanded citizens call upon City Manager Marcus Jones to fire City Planner Taiwo Jaiyeoba over what he viewed as "fancy footwork" and unethical practices. Mr. Bokhari used a story about the Planning Department overselling the Charlotte MOVES Task Force's recommendations from a City conducted poll as the basis for this proclamation. He conflated Mr. Jaiyeoba's cherry picking of positive polling data on a transit poll with the process of Charlotte 2040. In Bokhari's tweets there was also a specific reference against community benefits agreements (CBAs) and how it would close Charlotte for business.

During the entirety of our support for the Charlotte Community Benefits Coalition (CBC), CBAs have been framed by folks with ties to REBIC as both all powerful and also not really doing anything at all. It has become clear that Mr. Bokhari, serving as REBIC's mouthpiece on Council, is trying in desperation to do whatever he can to distract and conflate issues in order to throw water on the 2040 Plan so that REBIC can shape this process in the way they want.

As has been stated many times, our work as well as the work of the CBC will not stop after the vote on the 2040 Plan is finalized. In fact, it will have only just begun. We will need to continue to build our coalitions as well as advance the perspective of community members in these land use decisions. While there have been significant steps written into the Plan because of our political struggle, we will need to continue to build with people in our neighborhoods to fight for a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) that ensures that working class people are able to make land use decisions so they are not driven out of their neighborhoods.

Community Updates

- We will be hosting a screening of *Judas and the Black Messiah* on **Saturday, June 26th at 3:00 PM** at VisArt Video with a discussion of the film afterwards. Due to COVID, there is limited seating so please sign up at the Eventbrite link [here](#) to secure your spot for this movie and discussion. Tickets are free and open to anyone interested in attending. A note about the screening: VisArt is graciously letting HJC use this space for free (they usually charge \$35/hr) and they are a 501(c)(3) non-profit video store. As HJC we will be collecting donations during the screening to give to VisArt if you feel inclined. Donations are not required in order to come to the screening but they are welcomed as a way to give back to VisArt for allowing us to use the space.
- From Howie Acres: Howie Acres will be celebrating their 75th Anniversary on **Saturday, August 28th from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM** (4200 Redwood Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28205). I have attached a flyer below for more details.
- We will be having our next HJC General Meeting on **Wednesday, June 23rd at 6:00 PM**.
- We'd like to thank everyone in the CBC for putting on a great town hall last week! This was a great community-led forum for residents to see how they wanted to shape their neighborhoods and their city. There will definitely be many more as we get into the regulatory piece with the UDO.

The Week of 6/7-6/11/21

Charlotte City Council Strategy Session - Monday, June 7th

Full Agenda [Here](#)

Full Video of Meeting [Here](#)

This meeting was dominated by conversations about the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Councilmembers Tariq Bokhari, Ed Driggs, Matt Newton and Renee Johnson had all expressed sentiments that suggested that they weren't being heard regarding the language of the 2040 Plan. Councilmember Bokhari expressed at various points that Planning staff was untrustworthy throughout the entirety of the process.

Bokhari was apprehensive about the 10 minute neighborhood policy portion of Plan which he had asked to be changed so that people are within distances that allow for Uber, Instacart to get access to grocery stores, etc. These comments came after Mr. Bokhari's Committee report out from the Economic Development Committee where he called South End "Silicon South End."

Mr. Bokhari was the most vocal during the entirety of the session around the Comp Plan and continued to stress how the Plan could hamper future decisions about how tech could play a role in Charlotte.

Councilmember Johnson echoed Mr. Bokhari's concerns about Planning staff not listening to them on language change. Councilmember Larken Egleston motioned to change the language to Mr. Bokhari's liking before it was shut down by Councilmember Braxton Winston.

Councilmember Malcolm Graham alluded to the support being the majority at the moment and that everyone needed to trust the process. Councilmember Victoria Watlington said that she wanted to know what process was and did not want to be dragged along.

Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners Budget Public Policy Meeting - Tuesday, June 8th

Full Agenda [Here](#)

Full Video of Meeting [Here](#)

The biggest highlights of this meeting for our purpose concern the Update on the Encampment Hotels. A presentation was made by Karen Pelletier of Mecklenburg County Community Support Services. You can view the presentation [here](#).

As of 6/4/21, the County reported 213 people from Tent City as being "served" by County services. This means that 213 people were housed in hotels after the eviction at Tent City in February. 140 of those residents are still housed in hotels. The 73 that "exited" from the hotels are noted below:

- 11 people found permanent housing
- 11 people found emergency shelter
- 40 people are now unsheltered
- 6 are at a detention center (jail)
- 3 passed away
- 2 individuals are unaccounted for by the County

Pelletier noted that many of the issues and barriers to housing is the lack of options for safe, affordable housing for those experiencing housing insecurity. There's also a lack of permanent housing options as well as a lack of access for mental health and drug treatment.

The Community Needs as listed by the presentation are additional affordable housing units and permanent housing solutions. The presentation also recommended an increase in rental subsidies and landlords willing to accept applications of folks who are not housing secure.

The Week of 6/14-6/18/21

Charlotte City Council Regular Business Meeting - Monday, June 14th

Full Agenda [Here](#)

Full Video of Meeting [Here](#)

In this meeting, the City identified six city owned parcels that could be leveraged to build affordable housing. The parcels total 24 acres of land and sit at the following locations:

- Wendover Road

- Providence Road West
- Newland Road
- South Boulevard
- the intersection of North Graham and Statesville Avenue

During Council discussion on this matter, Councilmember Ed Driggs suggested that, since the city has already assigned \$50 million for affordable housing, they could put some of it back into the General Fund in kind for donating land, so the money could be spent on things he finds to be more urgent priorities. Malcolm Graham responded that \$50 million is not nearly enough to handle the current need for affordable housing in Charlotte, adding, "We need more."

Councilmember Bokhari said that the City was treading water on the issue and said that "this is not something that money is going to solve."

The head of Housing and Neighborhood Services Pam Wideman said that she would look into whether or not the City could set up a municipal land trust on the suggestion of Councilmember Braxton Winston.

This was also the meeting that [Councilmember Bokhari suggested that the City start criminalizing people who were panhandling as well as those who were giving to mutual aid groups who are helping the homeless in Charlotte](#). This was after a presentation given to the Council by Center City Partners.

In this meeting, the City Council [approved the FY2022 budget](#). The lone council member who voted against the budget was Councilmember Bokhari on the basis of the budget giving councilmembers a raise. The budget does contain an increase in CMPD's budget of 3.7% from approximately \$254m in the approved FY2021 to \$264m in the approved FY2022 budget. In the Housing and Neighborhood Services Budget, there is \$7m that has been set aside for neighborhood stabilization in the Corridors of Opportunity.

It also looks like the City Council will not be returning to in-person meetings anytime soon. City Council has made virtual meetings run indefinitely until the Governor ends the state of emergency declaration stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Governor has yet to end the state of emergency.

Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners Regular Business Meeting - Tuesday, June 15th

Full Agenda [Here](#)

Full Video of Meeting [Here](#)

There are two items of note from this meeting. The first is that Mecklenburg County decided to let its contract expire as of June 30th with the Historic Latta Place Inc. after they [posted a racist event for Juneteenth](#). The Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department later decided to close Latta Plantation indefinitely until the County hashed out next steps for the site.

The second is that Mecklenburg County is seeking the "age-friendly community" designation from AARP which would allow the County to have access to resources from AARP and best practices. In order to pursue this, the County would need to have approved an Action Plan that would then be sent to AARP. The County approved the action plan to be sent to AARP. You can view it [here](#).

The AARP designation would essentially give the County a tool to increase the population of the County. After a cursory look at the Plan, it's unclear what tangible effects this will have for "aging-in-place" policies that aim to curb displacement of seniors due to gentrification.

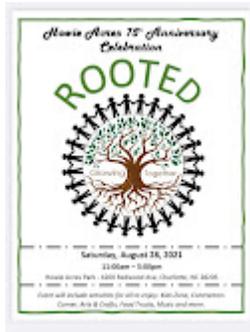
In the News

- [5 Things to know about Charlotte's future, according to the 2040 Plan - Axios Charlotte 6/21/21](#)
- [Facing eviction? \\$11m in rent help remains for Charlotte residents affected by COVID - Charlotte Observer 6/10/21](#)
- ['Renters are falling further behind' - WCNC 6/11/21](#)

Back to Class (Political Education)

- [Meet the Radical Workers' Cooperative Growing in the Heart of the Deep South - The Nation](#): One of our political education materials that we studied earlier this year was Cooperation Jackson's *Jackson Rising*. This article is

condensed and talks about economic development that is community-led and the challenges that faces Cooperation Jackson in a hostile state. While our circumstances and material conditions are different in Charlotte, North Carolina than Jackson, Mississippi, it's a good lesson about how gains can be made through organizing and political struggle.



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