

CHATTANOOGA NEIGHBORHOOD ENTERPRISE

Goals set for next mayor, council

BY SARAH GRACE TAYLOR

STAFF WRITER

As the city prepares to elect a new mayor and at least some new members of the City Council, the Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise has prepared a plan to help new leaders curate vibrant neighborhoods across the city.

Martina Guilfoil, CEO of the nonprofit [agencyfocused on providing housing and creating financiallydiverse neighborhoods](#), said the group was compelled to create a plan and guide the new administration toward thoughtful, strategic neighborhood improvement goals.

“Over the last few years, we just realized that there’s no monthly fee that’s really helping to inform the city around what makes sense in terms of good affordable housing and neighborhood policy. And there really hasn’t been a clear vision articulated in the community,” Guilfoil said. “And so we thought that CNE was well-positioned to be able to, with the new administration coming in, say, ‘Here’s a framework and some initial kind of strategies and action plans that we would recommend that you take in order to really build out a robust set of policies and vision.’”

The suggestions include more transparent and cost-efficient building requirements for affordable housing developers and creating a housing trust fund in the city to have a steady source of funding allocated specifically for housing efforts.

The framework provided to candidates relies heavily on a [HealthyNeighborhoods study by CNE](#). The study — performed by Virginia-based urban consultant group czbLLC last year — ranked Chattanooga’s strongest and weakest neighborhoods based on over 40,000 houses and a number of economic and environmental factors like education.

In the report, consultants wrote, “Chattanooga is well-positioned for the future less by continuing on its course than by intentionally developing inclusively.”

And so CNE went to work on restructuring the city’s approach to equitable urban planning.

“Basically, where it comes from is that if we keep doing the same thing over and over with neighborhoods, we’re gonna get the same results. And that, with limited resources, if you take those resources, and you put, let’s just say \$100,000 in each of the 40 neighborhoods in Chattanooga, you’re not going to have any impact,” Guilfoil said. “So asking how do you start re-framing? How do you target your limited resources to have an impact? That’s kind of what this framework is about.”

After the study was complete and the framework was created, CNE began reaching out to mayoral hopefuls.

According to Guilfoil, the group has reached out to all of the mayoral candidates and so far talked to candidates Monty Bruell, D’Angelo Davis, Tim Kelly, Keith Smartt, Wade Hinton and Kim White. Of those six candidates, she says they’ve all been fairly receptive of the plan.

"I think the equity piece is resonating with people. I think folks know that there has to be a clear vision and then some framework around how do we get there," Guilfoil said. "So no one has said 'This doesn't make any sense to me.'"

Going forward, Guilfoil says the group wants to share recorded conversations with the candidates to inform the public and will talk to council candidates, who are also up for election in March.

Read the framework here:

Adopt a framework to support thriving neighborhoods and housing that balances economic growth with the needs of residents:

› Create an economically inclusive framework for thriving neighborhoods and housing that guides the administrative goals and strategies of the city of Chattanooga.

› Establish an executivelevel position to lead citywide efforts focused on achieving the mayor's neighborhood and housing goals, while ensuring alignment and momentum across all departments and decision-making bodies.

› Form a multi-sector Housing Commission to work alongside city leadership to create and guide the framework, integrate resident input and act as an accountability partner.

Develop neighborhood-level strategies that address the unique market conditions of each neighborhood, positioning each for success:

› Utilize CNE's Healthy Neighborhoods report as the guiding principles for undertaking neighborhood reinvestment and market building to create positive change and impact.

› Create outcomes and metrics that are inclusive of improved market outcomes, income diversity goals.

› Identify and implement policies and programs that build neighborhood market strength and balance livability and affordability for income-diverse residents.

Increase affordable housing production, rehabilitation and preservation including homeownership, rental and home improvement:

› Establish a 10-year plan with annual goals of increasing homeowners, rental units and rehabilitated housing.

› Adopt policy interventions and strategies that promote affordable, quality housing solutions.

› Fix the development practices that act as regulatory and cost barriers to new housing development by updating and revising current building and zoning codes.

Increase city investment in housing to achieve affordable housing production and preservation goals:

› Assess and align all currently allocated funds to support housing and neighborhood goals.

› Partner with private and philanthropic partners to leverage city investment in housing and neighborhood goals.

› Establish a Housing Trust Fund by identifying the revenue streams allowed under state and local statutes that will provide dedicated, ongoing funding to achieve the goals and outcomes of the framework.

Contact Sarah Grace

Taylor at [staylor@times](mailto:staylor@timesfreepress.com)

timesfreepress.com.