

East Side Meeting Write-Up By Mitchell Pinsky

[COLUMBUS, OH] Members of the East Side of Columbus conveyed the diversity and collective unity that defines the area. On Wednesday, May 26, 2021, East Side residents met with the members of the Council Residential Districting Commission (CRDC) to discuss how their community can best be represented in the redistricting process.

“We are excited to be on the East Side to hear from you,” said CRDC Commissioner Monica Cerrezuela during her opening remarks.

The first CRDC regional meeting was held at the Barnett Recreation Center, 1184 Barnett Rd. Residents provided robust feedback on the current state of the East Side and the 150,000 residents who live there.

“Our numbers are dismal. Our unemployment is almost double the average in the City of Columbus. Our infant mortality rates and opioid numbers remain at crisis levels” revealed Jennifer Chamberlain, the chair of the Fair East Area Commission, in addition to the presence of crumbling infrastructure, a lack of recreation programs, and a housing crisis.

Despite these disparities, the Greater East-Side Coalition is working tirelessly to improve the quality of life for the 150,000 residents of the East Side. The strong collaboration of the Greater East-Side Coalition, which consists of all the East Side Area Commissions, highlights the bonds and strengths of the community that define the unity focused on making the East Side a thriving and growing community.

“The need for our three commissions to come together and form a coalition exemplifies that our needs are not being acknowledged with us acting singularly. Our mission for the Greater East-Side Coalition is to advocate, promote, sustain, and improve communities on the Greater East Side” said Jennifer Chamberlain.

Quay Barnes, chair of the Mideast Area Commission, added to this sentiment: “The most important thing... for the East Side is to change the perception that economic development policies and practices in our area are not as good as or the investment not as strong as in other parts of the city. We’d also like to be known as a great affordable, accessible place to live, work, and worship.”

Throughout the meeting, the greatest strength of the East Side was its status as home to many New Americans.

There are “significant Nepali & Somali communities on the Far Eastside, we also have the largest Senegalese and Mauritanian communities across Ohio in East Columbus as well as Macedonian, Liberian, and diverse Latino communities, said Ibrahima Sow, a Senegali living in the Far East. “Our community spread is reflected in the number of businesses, school attendance, and family outings during holidays/celebrations.”

The East Side CRDC Meeting told the story of an area, which in spite of the economic and developmental hardships it faces, is able to focus on becoming a thriving area through collaboration and unity. Such unity is driven by the diversity and strength of the New American community.

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[COLUMBUS, OH] Columbus, let’s make history. The Council Residential Districting Commission is drawing the maps that will create nine Council districts in the City of Columbus, and we need your help to get it right. In addition to the weekly neighborhood virtual meetings occurring right now, you have an option to take the CRDC survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/Columbusdistricts.

The survey asks users for their insights in neighborhood representation in Columbus and how they want to see the CRDC address the new residential Council districts. The information will inform the strategy in the drawing of the maps to take place later this year.

The survey is available online at:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/Columbusdistricts.

Working together, we can amplify every corner of the City with a legislative voice. The CRDC defining the future, today! Visit columbus.gov/districtingcommission for more info.

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