



Allapattah Community Members on GSA Lot Redevelopment

PUBLIC LAND FOR PUBLIC GOOD

THE ALLAPATTAH COLLABORATIVE, CDC

MIAMI HOMES FOR ALL

URBAN IMPACT LAB

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ALLAPATTAH COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON GSA LOT DEVELOPMENT

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Contributors

The following organizations provided critical input into the development of this report, by leading, supporting, and promoting the outreach and community engagement efforts that resulted in these findings.

About Public Land for Public Good

Public Land for Public Good, a coalition of 30+ community organizations, believes that public land should be developed equitably, sustainably, and with community involvement at each stage. Miami Homes For All serves as the backbone support for both Public Land for Public Good and the Greater Miami Housing Alliance.

About The Allapattah Collaborative, CDC

The Allapattah Collaborative is a Community Development Corporation implementing placemaking techniques to foster identity, support wealth-building strategies for marginalized communities of color and advocate for policies and procedures that support equitable, comprehensive and sustainable community development in the neighborhood of Allapattah.

About Miami Homes For All

Miami Homes For All, incorporated in 1985, believes that everyone in Miami should have a safe and stable place to call home. Armed with the best research available, and convinced that together we can accomplish more, Miami Homes For All pursues its mission through policy research, community engagement, coalition building, and policy education.

About Urban Impact Lab

Urban Impact Lab turns complex urban challenges into solutions that build better cities. Our data-driven process puts people first, to create community-centered, sustainable approaches. Urban Impact Lab is the contracted organization behind the authoring of this report.

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August 4, 2021

Introduction

In 2019, Miami Mayor Francis Suarez called for letters of interest to redevelop what is known as the Allapattah GSA lot, 18 acres of public land now being used by several city departments. The parcel on Northwest 20th Street is in the heart of a neighborhood that has recently drawn the interest of developers, for a variety of reasons. Allapattah’s proximity to downtown and the Health District, access to public transportation, and a wonderful cultural diversity, among other attributes, make it an attractive investment. As a result, affordability has recently emerged as a pressing topic, as Allapattah is one of the Miami neighborhoods where rents rose the most during the pandemic.

Because the redevelopment of a parcel of this size will affect the neighborhood for years to come, the Allapattah Collaborative, CDC, Miami Homes for All, and the 30-plus members of the Public Land for Public Good Coalition approached the city about ensuring local residents and business owners have a say in the land’s future. The city then verbally committed to partner with community organizations to conduct engagement in the Allapattah community regarding the redevelopment of the lot, and use those findings to inform the Request for Proposal for the GSA lot.

In the summer of 2021, these groups solicited proposals from six companies and ultimately worked with Urban Impact Lab to embark on this public engagement process, speaking with 117 Allapattah residents and business owners over four diverse engagements. The Allapattah Collaborative, Miami Homes for All, and Urban Impact also solicited and received funding from the Health Foundation of South Florida and The Miami Foundation to enact the public engagement process.

Key Insights

Before being approached, most residents did not know about the GSA lot or the city's plans to re-develop it, but most were still eager to be involved in shaping the future of the lot.

The Allapattah community prioritized the need for recreational and community gathering spaces as well as for more affordable housing

The following report provides a snapshot into resident and business owners’ views on Allapattah’s needs and the community’s understanding of the redevelopment occurring in their neighborhood.

Two key insights emerged from this process. First, before being approached, most of the residents interviewed did not know about the GSA lot or the city’s plans for it. However, once they were told about it, most also were eager to be involved in shaping the future of the lot. Perhaps most importantly, the community clearly prioritized the need for more recreational and community spaces for Allapattah, in addition to the need for more affordable housing.

Going forward, Public Land for Public Good Miami asks that the city and the developers take the community’s desires into account, and that the community be able to weigh in on a competitive Request for Proposals process that ultimately determines the GSA lot’s future.

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Overview and Methodology

The results of this report reflect four types of community engagement efforts: in-depth resident and business owner interviews, an online survey, a virtual Town Hall and an in-person Town Hall. In order to ensure that the data gathered came from individuals who live and work in Allapattah, respondents who were interviewed or filled out the online survey were asked in what zip code they lived or worked.

Resident and Business Owner Interviews

The first and richest form of data come from 66 in-depth interviews with Allapattah residents and small business owners, conducted from January through June of 2021. Interview respondents were reached through the Allapattah Collaborative's network, field canvassing of residential and business dense areas in Allapattah, and through referral from community engagement efforts. At the end of each interview, respondents were asked to suggest an additional person for interviewing in order to expand the reach beyond the organization's direct network.

The interviews consisted of 22-35 scripted questions, depending on the category under which respondents were classified (resident, business owner, or both), and covered four sections titled as follows: "Allapattah: An Overview," "Community Life: Experiences, Hopes, and Needs," "Local Business Owners Perspectives," and "Public Land Development: Northwest 20th Street and Northwest 14th Avenue Project." The interviews were conducted by the Allapattah Community Fellows, a youth leadership program of the Allapattah Collaborative. They lasted between 20 and 45 minutes and were conducted in-person, over Zoom, or via phone call. The audio was recorded with the respondent's consent, and answers were transcribed. The interview script was available in both English and Spanish to accommodate language preferences.

Online Survey

The online survey was launched on June 2, 2021 and received 37 complete responses as of July 15, 2021, in English and in Spanish. The survey had a maximum of 12 multi-select or single choice questions that would be prompted based on the respondents' previous answers, and took approximately two minutes to complete. Individuals were asked to state their preferred language for the survey, their relationship to Allapattah, their zip code, in addition to the community services and spaces they would like to see in Allapattah. Then survey respondents were provided a brief description of the GSA lot redevelopment, and asked if they knew this parcel of public land was being redeveloped, if they would like to inform the process, and finally their name and contact information for follow up. All completed survey answers were recorded and are shared in the report below.

Virtual Town Hall

The Virtual Allapattah Community Town Hall was held via Zoom on Wednesday June 16, 2021. The event was shared through physical flyers distributed in the Allapattah Main Street area and on social media platforms. The 41 individuals in attendance were given a brief presentation on the GSA lot

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redevelopment and then asked to answer three questions: What are the greatest concerns in Allapattah? How can the redevelopment of the GSA lot best support the Allapattah community? And how do we engage other community members around this development? All comments were transcribed by staff on the call and logged in a document. The answers to the first and second questions are reflected in the findings below.

In-Person Town Hall

The final engagement effort that has been completed up to this point was the In-Person Allapattah Community Town Hall on Tuesday, June 29, 2021 at Mision Nuestra Senora de la Altagracia (1779 NW 28 St., Miami, FL 33142). The event was shared via physical flyers at five distinct church services during the weeks prior to the event as well as through social media platforms. The 21 attendees of the In-Person Allapattah Community Town Hall learned about the GSA lot redevelopment by visiting several informational stations around the room. These stations allowed the attendees to ask questions as they went along. At the final station, they were provided with paper and writing utensils to answer the following questions: What are Allapattah's greatest needs, and what would be the best use of the GSA lot? Once again, the answers to these questions are reflected in the findings below. Attendance to this event was hampered due to weather conditions but participation from those who attended was high, and even leading to multiple participants being surveyed after visiting the stations.

Findings

The findings describe the results from the four distinct types of community outreach that resulted in 117 unique engagements. Some individuals participated in more than one of these forms of engagements. While all of their input will be reflected in the findings, these people were only counted once in the total number of unique engagements.

The findings are categorized based on questions asked, therefore the text will reference the type of engagement that yielded the corresponding responses. Readers may also refer to the following guide: Sections one through three reflect responses gathered from interviews, sections four and seven reflect responses gathered from interviews and both virtual and in-person Town Halls, and sections five, six, and eight reflect responses from interviews and from the online survey.

Findings by Type of Engagement

Sub-section #	Interviews	Online Survey	Virtual Town Hall	In-Person Town Hall
1	✓			
2	✓			
3	✓			
4	✓		✓	✓
5	✓	✓		
6	✓	✓		
7	✓		✓	✓
8	✓	✓		

1. Allapattah According to the Community

All 66 interview respondents were asked how they would define Allapattah. The most common responses were: community (35 percent), neighborhood (13 percent), diverse (10 percent), and melting pot (seven percent) accompanied by a wide range of descriptions such as cultural, unsafe, central, family-oriented, quiet, lively and changing. Respondents were also asked to identify the

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industries that define Allapattah. Food-related, small businesses were the most mentioned a total 42 times (27 percent), including restaurants, cafes, cafeterias, food trucks, and mom and pop eateries, demonstrating that the small restaurant industry has a strong influence on the commercial identity of Allapattah. Other mentions included retail stores (19 percent), barbershops (seven percent), grocery stores (four percent), and auto shops or mechanics (three percent).

2. Present and Future of Resident Life in Allapattah

Residents interviewed were asked four questions about their experience living in Allapattah and their perceptions of the area. These 63 interviewees were asked what attracted them to Allapattah. Twenty-five percent of respondents stated it was a family decision, and 22 percent mentioned the affordability of the neighborhood. Thirteen percent of respondents mentioned the cultural diversity of the area, twelve percent appreciated its highly-accessible and central location, five percent related their response to their job location, and another five percent focused on the friendliness of the community. Other respondents related their decision to the peaceful area (three percent), safety (two percent), their business (two percent), the scenery (two percent), life circumstances (two percent), and homelessness (one percent).

Responses on whether Allapattah is a good place to raise a family were varied. Twenty-nine percent of respondents simply answered “yes”, 21 percent answered “no”, and 10 percent had mixed opinions. Of residents interviewed, 83 additional reasons were provided for their stance, both on positive and negative responses to the question. The most common positive review of the area as family-friendly was the supportive community (21.7 percent), and the most common mixed or negative review was the safety of the neighborhood (19.3 percent), where the concerns included loitering and other crimes.

The interviewers also asked respondents to reflect on enjoyable and useful public spaces and services available to Allapattah residents. Respondents were encouraged to mention as many public spaces and services as they wished to include, and the 63 resident respondents mentioned a total of 134 spaces or services. Thirty-four percent of mentions singled out the Allapattah Branch library, 25 percent mentioned the parks including Juan Pablo Duarte Park and Curtis Park, and 10 percent were about public transportation services. Other responses included Miami Jackson High School Campus (seven percent), retail spaces (six percent), and the YMCA (four percent).

3. Present and Future of Business Life in Allapattah

The eight interview respondents who were business owners in Allapattah were asked four questions to ascertain the state of entrepreneurship in the area. The small business owners interviewed for this report work in a variety of industries. The business owners described their business as the following: fashion retail (two), a car service, a restaurant and nightclub, a not for-profit community organization, a tailoring shop, a real estate company and a barbershop. The businesses also varied in size, the smallest having three employees, the largest having 30, and the average size of the group being eight employees. Additionally, all eight businesses have at least one employee who is also an Allapattah

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resident, and the average for the group of businesses is four Allapattah-based employees. In conclusion, this group of businesses is varied and small in scale. The owners are deeply connected to the community through their physical presence in Allapattah but also by employing community members.

Small Business Profiles

8 SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS:

fashion retailers (2)
car service
restaurant and nightclub
not for-profit community organization
tailoring shop
real estate company
barbershop

SIZE RANGE

3 - 30 employees
avg. of group: 8 employees

YEARS IN BUSINESS

2 - 34 years
avg. of group: 13 years

BUSINESS PRIORITIES

40% - recovering from 2020 economic downturn
30% - growing the business
30% adjusting to address community needs

The businesses have been established for a wide range of time, from two to 34 years, with an average of 13 years in business. The top priorities for these small businesses are recovering and/or surviving the economic downturn of the COVID-19 pandemic (40 percent), as well as growing the business (30 percent), and adjusting to address community needs (30 percent). Lastly, the business owners were asked about their business outlook for the next five years as compared to the last five years. All eight owners expect their business to improve over this period of time. One respondent alluded to continuous hard work as the catalyst of their hopeful outlook, and another credited the owner's expanded experience in running a business.

4. Community Concerns and Priorities

Interview and virtual and in-person Town Hall participants were asked questions regarding the current conditions of Allapattah. Interview participants who are Allapattah residents were asked what their biggest concern was about current conditions in Allapattah, to which they voiced a total of 82 concerns. Twenty-eight percent of these concerns had to do with the safety of the area, 13 percent mentioned affordability of housing, 10 percent mentioned extreme climate, nine percent cited gentrification, and another nine mentioned infrastructure. Other mentions included a lack of the following: community resources (seven percent), economic development opportunities (five percent), efforts to beautify and maintain the area (five percent), community involvement (four percent), quality of education (four percent), the COVID-19 crisis (two percent), ongoing land development (two percent), and issues with mobility and transportation around the neighborhood (one percent).

Broadening the scope of the question to concerns about the future of Allapattah, interview respondents who live in Allapattah mentioned a total of 56 concerns. Thirty-two percent of these concerns focused on the effects of gentrification and the displacement of current Allapattah residents due to increasing unaffordability of the area; 27 percent mentioned extreme climate, and another 23 mentioned safety. Other concerns included not seeing progress in the neighborhood (five percent), not maintaining the area's cultural identity (four percent), lack of improvement to the presentation or beautification of public spaces (four percent), lacking community resources (two percent), deteriorating community health (two percent), and finally a lack of economic development opportunities (two percent).

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Attendees of the Virtual Town Hall described Allapattah's greatest concerns, which yielded 24 answers. Twenty-nine percent of answers mentioned unaffordability as a concern. Following in frequency were lack of economic opportunities (eight percent), no support for local businesses (eight percent), crime (eight percent), the loss of few existing resources (eight percent), and a need for more youth programming (eight percent). Other concerns and needs mentioned at least once included community involvement, childcare affordability, community centers and support, upkeep of existing infrastructure, community health, and resources for the elderly.

Attendees of the In-Person Allapattah Community Town Hall were asked to describe Allapattah's greatest needs, which led to 30 answers. Twenty-three percent of answers focused on the need for more community resources, 20 percent mentioned the potential for a recreational space, 17 percent said affordability, another 17 percent asked for green spaces, and 10 percent needed more small business resources. Other needs mentioned included beautification of the area (three percent), better educational facilities (three percent), health facilities (three percent), and public transportation (three percent).

5. Community Needs for Public Services and Spaces

The interview and online survey both asked respondents to specify public services or spaces that do not exist in Allapattah that they would like to access within the area. Interviewed resident respondents provided 74 distinct answers. Twenty-eight percent of these answers mentioned a community resource center or safe community space, such as an amphitheater, community-run gallery, or community garden. Another 28 percent mentioned a recreational space, such as a skatepark, children play areas, or public pool. Nine percent of respondents mentioned affordable housing. Other public spaces and services mentioned were educational facilities (seven percent), green spaces (seven percent), health and fitness facilities (seven percent), retail stores (seven percent), libraries (four percent), public transportation (three percent), and restaurants (one percent).

Business owner interview respondents were asked a similar question. These respondents were asked what public services or spaces do not exist in Allapattah that would benefit their business and their employees. Small business owners voiced four services and/or improvements they would like to see: increased safety, accessible government resources (such as the re-opening of a Neighborhood Service Center Division), better and more numerous green spaces, and an improvement of existing public transportation infrastructure.

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Online survey respondents were asked what community services and spaces do not exist in Allapattah that they would like to see in the future. They were given the option to select as many answers as they wished from a range of ten distinct community services and spaces, leading to the following results: 14 percent wanted to see more libraries and city services, 13 percent said more parks and other recreational spaces, 11 percent asked for access to affordable, fresh food markets, 11 percent said art and cultural centers, another 11 percent mentioned safe spaces for youth activities, 10 percent mentioned community gathering spaces, nine percent focused on quick and reliable public transportation, eight percent mentioned new affordable residential properties, and the remaining 14 percent was evenly split between a seniors citizens activity center and a small business resource center.

Responses by online survey respondents on Allapattah Community needs



6. Community Awareness of and Further Interest in GSA Lot Redevelopment

All individuals interviewed and surveyed were asked if they knew that the City of Miami plans to redevelop the parcel of public land that currently houses the General Administration Services of the City of Miami in Allapattah, known as the GSA lot. From the interview, 92 percent of respondents did not know and only a total of 5 respondents (8 percent) knew of the planned redevelopment. The online survey participants were more informed, but the majority were still unaware at 57 percent, and only 43 percent aware of the plan to redevelop.

Additionally, all individuals interviewed and surveyed were asked if they would be willing to be further engaged around informing the planning process for this redevelopment project. Eighty-eight percent of interview respondents wanted to be further contacted about the development, and 89 percent of online survey respondents wanted to be further engaged about the redevelopment of this parcel.

7. Community-informed Requests for GSA Lot Redevelopment

All respondents who participated in an interview or either the virtual or in-person Town Halls were informed, regardless of previous knowledge, that the City of Miami plans to redevelop the GSA lot. After this information was shared, respondents were asked what they would like the City of Miami to include in the redevelopment plan for this parcel.

Responses by interview respondents on needs for GSA re-development



Interview respondents provided 79 distinct answers. From these answers, 27 percent referenced a recreational space such as the aforementioned child play areas, pool, or skate park. Fifteen percent asked for a community center or similar community gathering space.

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Thirteen percent mentioned the need for affordable rent housing. Other answers included retail space (nine percent), communal green spaces (eight percent), educational facilities (eight percent), homeless shelter (six percent), police station (five percent), medical facilities (four percent), a business development center (three percent), and finally, one respondent asked that the redevelopment be made more sustainable through the inclusion of solar panels (one percent) and another asked it be accessible by public transportation (one percent).

Interview respondents were also asked to elaborate on the benefits that they believe their idea would bring to Allapattah, yielding 67 independent thoughts. From these answers, 18 percent referenced the expansion of community resources, 16 percent said they would increase community pride, another 16 percent mentioned addressing the housing affordability crisis, 13 percent said it would make Allapattah a safer community, and 12 percent said it would provide a safe space for Allapattah youth. Other answers included increasing local economic development (seven percent), increasing access to quality education (six percent), creating a healthier community (four percent), as well as creating community awareness (three percent) and preserving Allapattah’s cultural identity (three percent).

The individuals who participated in the Virtual Town Hall were asked a similar question as to what they wanted to see included in the redevelopment of this public land. Sixteen different answers were provided, broken up as follows: 26 percent asked for a community center with access to community development resources, 19 percent of attendees mentioned a need for more affordable housing, and 13 percent mentioned workforce housing. Other mentions included a fire station (six percent), a health and fitness facility (six percent), and space for youth programs (six percent). Attendees also said the redevelopment was an opportunity for bus route improvements (six percent), for multiple developments within the 18-acre plot (six percent), to contract small community developers (six percent), and to keep sustainability in mind in the design of this redevelopment (six percent).

Responses by Virtual Town Hall respondents on needs for GSA re-development



Responses by in-person Town Hall respondents on needs for GSA re-development



Attendees of the in-person Town Hall were also asked the question of what would be the best use for the GSA lot, providing 21 different thoughts under seven categories. Thirty percent of responses mentioned the need for a recreational space, 24 percent wanted green spaces, 19 percent wanted a community resource center, 10 percent asked for affordable housing, and another 10 percent asked for educational facilities. The remaining five percent mentioned a need for public transportation accessibility to be a part of the planning process.

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8. Demographics of Respondents

In order to ensure a representative sample of Allapattah's community, demographic data was gathered from each resident and business owner interview. The online survey only captured language preference and zip code (referenced above but not discussed in findings). No demographic data was captured at the virtual or in-person Town Halls.

For language preference, interviewees and survey respondents were offered to answer questions in either English or Spanish. From the 66 individuals interviewed, 70 percent chose to answer the questions in English, and 30 percent answered it in Spanish. For the online survey, responses were overwhelmingly in English at 90 percent, and only 10 percent in Spanish. While the preferred language for both of these engagements was English language, the interview outreach was more successful in reaching the more disenfranchised population of Spanish-language speakers.

Demographic data gathered in the interviews includes length of residency in Allapattah and homeownership status for Allapattah resident respondents. Respondents were also asked their age, gender identity, racial and ethnic identities, and due to the neighborhood's history as an immigrant community, whether they are an immigrant, child of an immigrant, or neither.

Answers for length of residency ranged from three months to 46 years. The average time living in Allapattah for the group was 16 years. The majority of residents were renters (67 percent), 21 percent were homeowners, and the remaining 13 percent lived with someone else rent free (such as a parent).

The age range for interview respondents was 17 to 78-years-old (responses by one legal minor were recorded with parental approval). The mean age of the respondents was 34-years-old. Fifty-seven percent of respondents identified as a woman, 40 percent identified as a man, one respondent identified as non-binary (two percent), and another respondent preferred not to say (two percent).

For racial and ethnic identities, respondents were encouraged to mention all identities that apply to them. No prompting was provided, resulting in the following: 58 percent of respondents identified as Hispanic or Latina/o, 15 as Black or African-American, 22 percent as white, three percent as Afro-Latina/o, one individual as Jewish (one percent), and another individual as Native-American or Indigenous (one percent).

When asked whether the respondent was an immigrant, child of immigrant parent(s), or neither, 52 percent responded immigrant, 32 percent responded child of immigrant parent(s), and 17 percent identified as neither.

Overall, the demographic data from the interview sample of 66 individuals is similar to the demographics of Allapattah, at large. According to the *2012-16 American Community Survey*, the average age is 37-years-old, 48 percent of the population is identified as female, and 52 percent as

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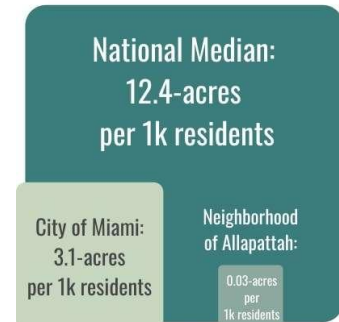
male. The population is 74 percent Hispanic or Latino/a, 21 percent African-American or Black, and 4 percent white. Among Hispanic or Latino/a individuals, 79 percent are racially white, 10 percent are Black, 10 percent is a non-classified “other”, and one percent is mixed. Lastly, 63 percent of the population is foreign born or immigrant.

Conclusion

Allapattah residents are eager to take part in shaping the redevelopment of the GSA lot. They also are keenly aware of the community’s most pressing needs.

In each of the four engagement experiences, Allapattah residents noted the need for more community and recreational spaces. According to the City of Miami “[Parks and Recreation](#)” page, the city has over 1,400 acres of community centers, swimming pools, gymnasiums, parks, and other community and recreational spaces. Using 2019 population estimates, the City of Miami has only about 3.1-acres of green spaces per 1,000 residents, well below the national median of 12.4-acres per 1,000 residents, according to *The Trust for Public Land* ([Parks for People - Miami](#)). For Allapattah specifically, it is only .03-acres of green space per 1,000 residents. Overall, the city and Allapattah are facing a green space deficit that the GSA lot can begin to address.

Parks and Recreation Space in the City of Miami



Secondarily, residents noted the need for more affordable housing. As mentioned earlier, housing affordability is a relatively new issue for Allapattah residents. However, with new development in the neighborhood, rents are on the rise, which will only exacerbate Miami-Dade County’s need for homes its residents can afford. Right now, Miami-Dade needs to produce or preserve affordable homes for 210,000 households by 2030. The Allapattah GSA lot could be used to ease, not exacerbate, this issue.

Based on these findings, the Allapattah Collaborative, in partnership with the Public Land for Public Good Coalition and Urban Impact Lab, recommend that the City of Miami refer potential developers of the GSA Lot to this report as a preliminary guide of community expectations. As it previously agreed, the city should also incorporate the findings of this report into the scoring of proposals as part of a competitive developer selection process for the site. Because many respondents expressed eagerness to be engaged further in the GSA Lot’s redevelopment, we also recommend that community members are invited to participate in the selection process and to offer feedback on final plans for the lot.

Next steps to continue to include Allapattah community in GSA lot re-development

1. Refer potential developers to these findings
2. Incorporate findings in scoring of proposals
3. Include community members in selection process
4. Allow feedback from community members on proposals



The Allapattah Collaborative and Public Land for Public Good Coalition is ready to offer support to the city to ensure that these 18-acres of public land in Allapattah are redeveloped with the community’s needs and input in mind.