

Ashland – Phase II Meeting

Tuesday, August 23, 2011
St. Paul School of Theology
5:30-7:30pm
12 attendees

The following is a summary of the discussion/feedback from the Phase II meeting for the Ashland vacant site.

RECAP OF SITE TOUR FEEDBACK

During the site tour, the district received feedback about community needs and reuses that could address community needs. Key things that the district has noted from the site tour discussion:

- *Vacant lot perceived as better than a vacant building – more opportunities for reuse + safer (i.e., no building to attract criminal activity)*
- *Future development needs to promote a safe environment with positive traffic*
- *Location – next to Boys & Girls Club is an opportunity (rec fields)*
- *Strong desire for community/skills center that addresses community needs*
- *No support for housing on the site – too many vacant houses/lots that need to be redeveloped*

Participants confirmed that this was a good summary of the site tour feedback. They also indicated that the following item should be included:

- Need/desire for a grocery store

In addition, there was discussion around the merits of a community garden on the site (note: during the site tour, participants were not supportive of a community garden as there were concerns about upkeep requirements). Participants of the Phase II meeting again expressed concerns about maintenance of the facility, staffing needs if it was associated with Boys & Girls Club, and whether the site was too large, indicating that a smaller plot might be more manageable.

REUSE FEEDBACK

The district has received strong community feedback prior to the Phase II meeting in support of a community resource/services center that would offer job/skills trainings, social services, etc. However, there are concerns about the cost to build and operate this project; significant partnerships will be necessary. The following summarizes the discussion during the Phase II meeting:

Community feedback for **Community/Skills/Resource/Services Center**:

- Community members strongly support the construction of a skills center to train youth/retrain adults for jobs. In addition, the facility could be used by senior as well. In addition, the facility could provide a basketball court, recreational site for young adults too old for Boys & Girls Club. Indoor recreational fields/facilities would be a good addition because weather affects people using courts. The facility should also address different needs for young childcare and teens/young adults
- There was general consensus amongst participants that training was a high priority, more than recreation

- Participants indicated that the site is a good location because it is a central location, with good road access
- Participants expressed concern that funding would be a challenge and that it would take time to prepare and construct. They felt 5 years would be needed to allow for planning and funding
- In addition, there was concern that this type of reuse would duplicate some of the same services provided at the Boys & Girls Club (facility could be just be for people 19 and older or out of high school). The facility might also be in competition with YMCA if membership cost is too low
- Participants identified potential partners, including: Full Employment Council, Kauffman Scholars, KCP&L, East 23rd St. PAC

While the Phase II meeting participants identified construction of a community/skills center as their highest priority, the development of recreational fields, and specifically soccer fields, had been identified as a need for the community during the Ashland site tour as well as at other meetings. The technical assessment has identified the development of fields as a more viable project as it would be a lower cost option. The following summarizes the discussion during the Phase II meeting:

Community feedback on **Open Space/Recreational Fields:**

- All participants agreed that an acceptable interim use would be a multi-field recreational use that could be used by Boys & Girls Club and that was also open to community recreational use. Note, a community member did express a concern that Ashland Square already has a soccer field

At the site tour, participants indicated that there wasn't an interest in using the site for residential, however, the technical assessment indicates that redevelopment of the site as single-family residential could foster additional redevelopment/reinvestment around the site.

Community feedback on **Single-Family Residential:**

- Participants were not interested in residential development of the site. It is a low priority as there are already many vacant homes in the area. They would prefer for those homes/lots to be redeveloped first

During the site tour, participants expressed a need for additional retail, especially a grocery store. While there was interest, the technical assessment has indicated that the site is not a strong candidate for this type of redevelopment.

Community feedback on **Office/Retail:**

- The participants agreed that there was a need for a grocery store in the area, but that the site was not the ideal location
- Additional comments/feedback included:
 - The only grocery store nearby is a small store at 24th and Cypress
 - There is a need in the community for a grocery store, however there is concern about relying on an outside developer that may not be interested in the neighborhood

- There was also concern about the parking requirements and increased traffic in the neighborhood

During the site tour, participants expressed a need for a neighborhood school, however, the technical assessment indicated that the site is not of adequate size to accommodate a modern school.

Community feedback on **School Use:**

- While the participants indicated a desire to have a neighborhood school in the area, they acknowledged that the site is not good for modern school design

SOLICITATION PROCESS

The district has a few options available to it when it disposes of surplus property and wants to get the community's feedback on them:

- Choose to sell or lease
- Use one of three methods to sell/lease:
 - Market a property through a real estate broker
 - Formal bidding process (award to highest bidder)
 - Negotiate directly with a community group

During the meeting, participants were asked to provide their feedback on the solicitation process. The following summarizes their feedback/comments.

Community feedback on the **Solicitation Process:**

- The participants wanted the district to allow as much time as possible for the community to raise funds to develop the skills center before considering a sale/lease of the property to an outside developer. In the interim, they would work with the district to develop the recreational fields
- The Boys & Girls Club is interested in staying involved (could help organize/promote forums, community center could provide jobs for youth). The East 23rd Street PAC should also be involved – need to encourage the neighborhood to get involved.
- Need to follow up with Power and Light, City Manager, City Council, Parks and Rec, Sporting KC, professional teams

Next Steps

- The participants expressed support for a PIAC grant application for recreation fields; stepping stone to a longer term plan for a community training center