

Medfield State Hospital Visioning

Discussion Notes: Internal Town Staff and Officials Workshop

December 12, 2013

General Issues and Opportunities

- Site includes 60 structures and 800,000 square feet of floor area.
- Cost of renovations is the big question.
- Ideally at least the 23 core buildings would be preserved.
- Keep existing open space.
- What would the 23 buildings be used for?
 - Look at former Danvers State Hospital – 2/3 of the buildings were demolished
 - Could you save the facades and rebuild behind them?
 - Look at former Foxborough State Hospital
 - Look at former Northampton State Hospital
- What potential uses for the core?
- Deteriorated over the last 10 years.
- Four buildings will be assessed as a sample to determine structural issues and potential costs.
- Price has been negotiated with the state: potential reuse will not affect the deal – the state will simply share in any profits if the town resells part of the property.
- Opportunity for the town to meet some of its needs while expanding the tax base:
 - Senior housing
 - Housing for empty nesters
 - Housing for Gen X and Y – 800-1000 square foot apartments.
 - Recreational needs
 - Some mixed-use, retail/commercial.
- Establish the needs of the town first.
- How long would the town be responsible for providing security – current cost is about \$100,000 per year. (There is concern about the Town having to take over responsibility and cost).
- Need activities for all ages, families – could provide an unparalleled recreational facility.
- A lot of older people moving out of Medfield because of the lack of diverse housing choices in town. (Limited opportunities to “downsize” from larger single-family homes).
- Senior housing and assisted living are needed in town.
- Over-55 housing needed so citizens don't have to leave the town.
- Could be a money-maker as a housing project for younger people and smaller households.
- Opportunity to meet the town's responsibilities under Chapter 40B (170 units are needed to meet the 10% state requirement for affordable housing). This would relieve the threat hanging over other neighborhoods.
- Town will have control over density, design and the mix of uses.
- Combine recreation with the arts – make it a destination
- Waterfront property is off-limits, but there will be a canoe launch and the Bay Circuit Trail.
- Chapel could be a focal point for community activities and civic events.

Concerns and Needs of Town Departments

Library:

- Public gathering space.
- Conference center.
- Performance space.
- Active and passive recreation and public art.

School Department:

- 2,709 students right now – understand the need to increase revenue generally to help pay for the schools.
- Wrentham Mall pays \$1Million in taxes, but cost the town more in services.
- Norfolk has an over-55 development with retail on the frontage of Rt. 115.
- MSH reuse should increase tax revenue but reduce the impact on schools.

Economic Development Committee:

- 88-90 acres are developable.
- DCR and the Trustees of Reservations probably won't go for golf. Perhaps Frisbee Golf? Driving Range?
- Look at the whole site:
 - What should be preserved?
 - What affordable housing is needed?
 - What other housing – for elderly or gen-x – is needed.
 - What other uses will make it a destination.

Medfield Youth Outreach:

- Principal provider of human services to the town.
- Wilkins Glen Section 8 housing brings in new people, challenges.
- Need space to work with youth.
- Need to look at the whole town, not just the State Hospital site.

Police Department:

- Never had responsibilities there before.
- There are always issues with large numbers of people living close together, but they are prepared to deal with it.
- Concerned about maintaining security when the private security service leaves the site.
- It's an attractive nuisance right now – attracts thrill seekers.
- MSH reuse should support empty-nester housing on the site.

Fire Department:

- With new building codes, any new construction is not a burden on the fire department.

- Concerned about the security of abandoned buildings.
- Potential new residents will increase medical calls, but will likely not be a big percentage increase compared to their responsibilities for the rest of the town.

Council on Aging/ Medfield Housing Authority:

- Currently a waiting list for subsidized housing.
- Need more single-floor living.
- Distance of the site from the town center would require transportation (public transit is not currently available to the site).
- Bigger need for senior housing than for mixed-income.

Conservation:

- Site is a mini-arboretum (there is a diverse variety of tree specimens that need to be preserved).
- The property is a significant resource for wildlife.
- Need to plan as a whole, including the open space context.
- Could preserve the essence of the campus, even if the buildings can't be saved.
- Supports eco-friendly design, energy efficiency, low-impact development, etc.
- Partner with other communities with shared interests?
- Shared high school facilities or summer camps with other towns?
- Don't let the town be pushed into short-term planning.
- Take time to do it right.
- Concern about DCR management – theirs is the first budget to be cut.
- Need to secure funds for maintenance.
- Garden in the Woods, Town Hill could be models.

Department of Public Works

- Infrastructure will be developed to support the project (underground infrastructure is in questionable condition).
- Will the roads be public or private? (if public, they will need to be brought up to town standards).
- Stormwater has to comply with EPA requirements.
- New water tower is in the planning stages.
- The proposed limit on water consumption is 65 gallons per person per day; the appropriate limit when considering reuse is the total average daily withdrawal limit of 1.52 million gallon, which includes all uses (not just residential).

Other Thoughts:

- Medical Campus?
- Company housing on campus with the new employer? (i.e. similar to traditional New England Mill towns or new high tech campuses).
- Could historic tax credits help?

- Brattleboro Retreat – Another former state “asylum” with a similar campus design (smaller buildings, quad, open spaces) and reuse by large institution.