

Blenheim – Phase II Meeting Summary

Thursday, September 8, 2011  
 South-Broadland Presbyterian Church  
 5:30-7:30pm  
 6 attendees

The following is a summary of the discussion/feedback from the Phase II meeting for the Blenheim school site:

**RECAP OF SITE TOUR FEEDBACK**

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

- School served as a resource for the community – health program, computer classes, food pantry - now those services are no longer available nearby
- Challenges of copper theft, water damage
- Variety of reuse options identified: senior housing, health clinic, social service center
- If the site was reused as another school – preference for younger ages (Pre K – 7)

Participants confirmed that this was a good summary of the site tour feedback and added that reuse of the school as a Pre K – 7 facility could increase residency and home ownership as it would attract families to the neighborhood.

**REUSE FEEDBACK**

Based on the technical assessment and feedback from the site tour, several types of reuse have been identified as viable options for Blenheim, including multi-family residential, a combination of residential and social services/community uses, or as a facility that provides social/community services.

Community feedback on **Multi-family Residential or Mixed Use (Residential + Social Services/Community Center/Etc):**

- The participants were not interested in multi-family apartments/rentals that were either affordable or market rate as they considered them to lack stability, create parking issues. Participants were worried about “what comes with a rental property”
- The participants indicated, however, that they would be supportive of senior housing, including senior rentals, as there was a feeling that senior housing is needed in the area. D. A. Holmes was considered a good model
- Some participants also indicated that they wanted the developers to be local with a long-term commitment to Kansas City
- The participants also indicated support for senior housing coupled with social services

Community feedback on **Social Services/Community Center/Etc:**

- Participants expressed strong support for social/community services. They indicated an opportunity to partner with Parks and Recreation and/or Research Hospital

The technical assessment indicated that based on the site’s location and layout (lack of exterior and interior visibility) it’s not a strong candidate for retail or office use, and while commercial space could be developed along Prospect Avenue, the market has not been strong for new development.

Community feedback on **Retail/ Office Use:**

- Participants indicated that they had been promised new retail in the past, which didn’t develop. They expressed the feeling that they didn’t think it would work at this site.

Community feedback on **Educational Use:**

- Participants indicated that they were supportive of reuse of the site by a public school, including a charter, private or religious school. They are most interested in elementary-aged children, although they are open to older-aged children as well.
- Participants indicated that the entity should be able to demonstrate long-term capacity. They did express that they want to attract new children and families to the neighborhood; however, they felt that a new school would not likely achieve that and instead the children would come from outside the neighborhood

Community feedback on **Additional Uses:**

- Participants also added that the following reuses/projects would be in line with community interests:
  - Grounds used by children to give them a needed outlet. A possible partnership with Parks and Recreation could be pursued.
  - Research Hospital Partnership
  - Extended stay hotel in connection with Research Hospital

Participants indicated that of the reuses that were discussed, the following (in no particular order) would be their priorities:

- Senior housing/ services
- Educational
- Social Services Only

**SOLICITATION PROCESS**

The district has a few options available to it when it disposes of surplus property:

- Choose to sell or lease
- Use one of three methods to sell/lease (as required by state statute):
  - Market a property through a broker
  - Formal bidding process (award to highest bidder)
  - Negotiate directly with a community group/governmental agency

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:**

- Participants were open to either a lease or a sale of the building
- Participants expressed a desire to be included in the process of reviewing proposals. They requested that prospective buyers/tenants meet with the Tri-Blenheim and

Walnut Grove Neighborhood Associations in advance of submitting their proposal to the district. Charles Kennedy, President of Tri-Blenheim should serve as the primary contact person

### **INTERIM REUSES/ACTIONS**

In the event the district doesn't receive viable proposals for Blenheim, or if it takes several years, the district solicited feedback from the community on interim actions/activities.

#### **Community feedback on Interim Uses:**

- Participants stressed that something needed to be done and expressed a desire to see change within seniors' lifetimes
- The participants did not identify any priorities for interim uses. They did indicate that a community garden or farmers market would be acceptable; however, they expressed concern over who would take care of it
- When presented with the question, participants responded that they would be interested in assisting the District find a reuse, however, they were concerned about feasibility and time requirements

### **DEMOLITION**

For every site, the district is gathering community feedback on the possible demolition of the building.

#### **Community feedback on Demolition:**

- Participants expressed concern about KCMSD's maintenance of open space/razed sites. In addition, they cited the Citadel project on 63<sup>rd</sup> Street as an example of a major redevelopment project where homes were demolished, but the development project stalled and the site sits empty, which was not looked upon favorably by the participants