

Meservey – Phase II Meeting

Tuesday, November 1, 2011

Mohart Multipurpose Center

5:30 -7:30pm

8 participants (6 neighborhood residents, 2 neighborhood church representatives)

The following is a summary of the discussion/feedback from the Phase II meeting for the Meservey closed 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:

- Concerns about the size of the building and the cost to renovate/maintain
- Concerns about vandalism if site remains vacant
- Feeling that partnerships will be needed to make the project viable
- There are a variety of community needs that the building could address: housing, social services, youth activities
- Neighborhood could use grounds to host events/gatherings

The participants concurred with the assessment, but wanted to add the following:

- Questions were raised about a possible mixed use residential and social service combination in the building. Tech team confirmed that this was a possible reuse due to the building being heavy on classroom space.
- Participants reiterated the desire to have a neighborhood elementary school within walking distance. Some suggested that for the next 5-10 years, minimal modifications should be made to the building, ensuring easy transition back to a school if the area repopulates.
- A participant indicated that the site could be reused as a small, neighborhood shopping center which could generate funds to finance the nonprofit services desired by the community.

REUSE FEEDBACK

Based on the technical assessment and feedback from the site tour, several types of reuse have been identified as viable options for Meservey. The following provides a summary of the community feedback received in discussing reuse options:

Community feedback on **Residential Use or Residential Combined with Other Uses:**

- Participants were open to a residential use of the building with a caveat of it being especially for aging seniors. Lack of housing options for seniors was identified as a need in the area. In contrast participants were not supportive of Section 8 housing, as it was said to be plentiful in the area and often characterized by a high turnover rate. Senior housing with a community center component is a possibility the neighborhood is open to considering based upon the proposal submitted.
- Parties interested in residential proposals should be willing to work with community members, community partners, and existing businesses in the area.

Community feedback on **Educational/Community-Oriented Reuse:**

- Participants strongly desire the building to return to educational reuse as a neighborhood elementary school. However, they also noted that population loss, coupled with an aging neighborhood population, have resulted in a decline in the number children. Many felt that the neighborhood did not have enough children to fill a neighborhood school. It was also noted that Meservey is in close proximity to a newer, open public school, Carver.
- Community-oriented reuse was also supported by participants. Many indicated a desire for a community use that particularly benefited seniors and children. Members of a faith-based organization indicated a desire to use the building for a variety of social service uses, including education, job services, and a food pantry. Due to the building's size and configuration, it was noted that multiple tenants or mixture of uses may be required to make community-oriented reuse a viable option. Most participants were supportive of a social service component, however expressed the desire not to overlap services already available in the neighborhood.

Community feedback on **Commercial (Office, Retail):**

- A small, neighborhood shopping center was indicated as a desirable reuse by some participants. The center could house independently owned shops and cater to neighborhood residents. This reuse was proposed as being one component of a mixed use project including services and possibly senior housing. It was expressed that the commercial use could generate enough revenue to facilitate other desired uses. A participant felt that a shopping center would require little in terms of building reconfiguration and allows the building to return to educational reuse if needed.
- Other participants were not in favor of any commercial use. It was noted that Meservey sits in a poor location for commercial use, as it is in the middle of a residential neighborhood. The area was said to already have adequate space for commercial businesses, in more appropriate locations. Many felt that a shopping center could not have success and that retail in general is often characterized by high turnover. It was expressed that a shopping center would increase crime and bring unwanted strangers into the neighborhood.
- All participants agreed that any commercial proposal should identify all types of vendors and provide adequate proof of economic viability.

Community feedback on **Reuse Prioritization**

Participants were asked to indicate whether any of the reuses that had been discussed would be a priority over the others.

- Education was indicated to have the highest priority over other reuses. However, participants noted that educational reuse would only be supported if neighborhood population/demographics indicate the need for a neighborhood elementary school in the future.
- Community-oriented use and senior housing were also expressed to have priority and fulfill current needs of the neighborhood.
- Projects that provide job creation was discussed, however, the group was not all in agreement that this was a priority (many residents are retired in the area)

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 desire an RFI be issued before the property is listed with a broker. It was also deemed important for the community to be able to view all proposals in an open format.
- Any oversight or community involved should be coordinated through Vineyard Neighborhood Association. Participants indicated a desire to have presentations of proposals made to the neighborhood association.

INTERIM REUSES/ACTIONS

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

Community feedback on Interim Uses:

- Participants were open to the use of the athletic fields/grounds in exchange for grass cutting/maintenance as an interim use of space.

DEMOLITION

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

Community feedback on Demolition:

- Community would like to see all options exhausted before demolition is considered. Participants felt they could support demolition with the caveat of another reuse being put in its place.