

SWITZER-WEST AND SWITZER ANNEX – PHASE II MEETING

Thursday, June 9, 2011

5:30 -7:30pm

54+ attendees between Douglass/Switzer-West sites

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

***Residential Use (Switzer-Old West):***

- During the site tour we heard strong support for residential reuse of the site. Would you agree or disagree that “residential” is the preferred reuse for the site?
  - The community supports housing as the preferred reuse
  - The community needs mixed income housing stock
  - The neighborhood has gentrification concerns
  - Goals for the neighborhood include attracting and retaining new residents
  - A mixture of market rate and subsidized rents are preferred
  - The neighborhood is concerned that rents are currently too high, even among senior and subsidized housing complexes
  - A blend of housing is the goal (both with ownership/rental and market rate/subsidized rents)
  - The community expressed the possibility of a mix of new construction and renovation to be implemented on the site
  - The community identified a need for low-income housing but don't want it to be too concentrated
  - How much time will be okay to finding the perfect fit for the new owner/
  - We don't have any more time!
  - Buildings need to happen now!
  - Will the building be for sale soon?

***Community Use (Switzer-Old West):***

- If the district enters into negotiations with an entity to acquire the site, should community access to the facility/site for these types of activities be a consideration? A requirement?
  - The community would like to still have access to public facilities within the West-Switzer complex, such as the gymnasium, pool, and theatre. The access to facilities could be incorporated into a residential housing project.
  - Access to building: Library, Gym, Pool
  - Education space for teen center
  - After school program: Theatre, Incubator, Art class
  - Need to understand what is going into community center

- Allow the community to facilitate discussion with the developer.
- Bad, blatant stewardship in the past from the District.
- We want to work with everyone and anyone but with a different attitude.
- One neighbor stated that her vision for the site is a not-for-profit community partnership. She thinks the buildings should serve a community use and not private interest.

***Commercial Use (Switzer-Old West):***

- Would you agree/disagree that commercial use would be acceptable to the community? What kinds – office, retail, combination? Why?
  - Support for commercial reuse was mixed. Residents acknowledged that commercial would be more acceptable along West Pennway (Annex site), rather than other streets.
  - No support for retail – it should be located further to the north. It would create too much traffic which would negatively impact the neighborhood
  - Offices won't create as much traffic
  - Office space was acceptable as long as it didn't bring lots of traffic into the neighborhood. Some residents pointed to high vacancy rates in adjacent areas and were unsure why offices would want to move into this location

***Switzer Annex:***

- Some members of the community suggested that the sites (West-Switzer and Switzer Annex) be considered and sold as one project.
- There was also support for considering redevelopment of Switzer Annex on its own. However, the feeling was that it's redevelopment should support/contribute to the redevelopment of the Switzer-West complex.
- The community would be supportive of educational reuse, such as a charter school. The community approached the district years ago to consider its reuse a charter, but the district was not supportive.
- Commercial, art space, etc were also supported for this site.
- Retail was not supported. Retail should be located further to the north. It would create too much traffic which would negatively impact the neighborhood

## Evaluation Criteria

What criteria should the district be considering as it evaluates entities who are interested in leasing/purchasing these sites. For example, community members have expressed concern about the capacity of groups to redevelop the sites? Is this a concern you share? Do you have any requests for how the district might address this?

- "If someone comes up with a viable plan to take over the building, we will take it. We want the District out of the property management business in this community."
- There was concern about the financial realities of reuse ideas. "Too much time has passed already. We don't have the luxury of finding the perfect deal or project."
- A potential developer should have a proven track record on projects of a similar scope and context. The community would like to be able to vet developers, such as by being able to research past successful projects.
- It was recommended that the district execute an option for purchase agreement as a way to ensure development actually takes place
- There has to be economic viability.
- Could developer be required to reach out to the community first?
- District should look at track record of developer as a qualifier
  - o Record with structures
  - o Scope of project
  - o Experience with developing a large project
  - o Enter into option agreement for time frame for development

## Demolition

For every site, the district wants to get community feedback on the dreaded "D" word – Demolition.

- Community would not support demolition of the entire complex.
- In light of the technical assessment of the industrial arts building, the community would be willing to accept demolition of this particular building if it enabled the restoration of the others.
- Okay to take down "Building D", may be used for parking
- If deal breaker with developer "yes"
- Leave other buildings alone