

Preliminary Agenda
Symmes Neighborhood Presentation

- Short Introduction

Introduction of the presenters.

Description of how information was gathered.

- Impact History

Identification of past/current problem areas.

Neighborhood protection process problems, both from past redevelopment and ongoing problems.

- Neighborhood Concerns

General concerns about the development.

- Ongoing Impact Identification and Protection

Proposed method for the ongoing impact identification process for Financial Analysis Working Group.

Continuing neighborhood protection process during and after the design and construction phases.

- Discussion: Questions and comments from the VHB, SAC or public.

Neighborhood Impact History

Problem areas:

Traffic

- When Symmes Hospital was functioning, trying to bear right up Hemlock to Brattle, Pine, and Lansdowne streets across traffic coming out of Hospital Road was consistently dangerous. Traffic coming down all these streets to Summer can easily get backed up.
- The streets surrounding the Symmes site are narrow and/or steep and have never been amenable to the volume and speed of commuter traffic. Woodside Lane has curves and blind spots (especially at the intersection with Vista Circle) that are a dangerous match with the tendency to drive too fast down the hill. Brattle, Millett, and Lansdowne streets are maintained by residents.

Operations

- Noise from truck loading docks, which often get deliveries from tractor-trailer trucks, are close to property line with Brattle St. residences.
- Truck route goes around the hospital, near abutters on Vista Circle and Woodside Lane, then along the property line with Brattle St. and requires backing up for a long distance (with associated beeper noise) to leave the loading docks.
- HVAC, boiler room, and generating equipment were also located along property line of Brattle St. residences and are excessively noisy. The neighbors on all sides of Symmes complained of HVAC noise.
- Against a regulation restricting activity on the Symmes site to hospital uses, previous owner rented the lower parking area to a local landscape construction company that used it as a home base for its business. Each day, they made a great deal of noise pushing around and loading sand, soil, etc. with front loaders and using other heavy equipment, then throughout the night during snow storms. Looking into and solving this violation took a great deal of time and effort in our community.
- There is a past history of dumping in the woods, including leaves that blow down into residents' yards from fall into spring.

Design and Construction

- Previous blasting may have caused damage to houses and disruption of water table/springs causing water problems in neighborhood.
- Placement of both hospital wing additions was insensitive to the impact on the residential neighborhood.
- When the flat loading dock area behind Symmes was widened, soil, blasted rubble, boulders, and concrete and asphalt pieces were dumped to build out over what was once an attractive wooded hill behind houses on Brattle Street. This killed most of the vegetation and buried the bases of many of the trees. It created a severely steep, dry slope that makes it difficult for younger trees to grow much before falling over.

- When parking lot was enlarged, the woods behind residents' homes were suddenly cut down without warning.

Protection Process Problems:

- The regulations concerning blasting times for the 1982 wing construction were not followed. The availability of a pre-blasting inspection was not known to some of the property owners.
- The 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. regulation of deliveries to the loading docks that were specified in the 1982 wing construction Request for Special Permit are periodically ignored.
- The Redevelopment Board decision on the shielding of exterior lighting (1982 Request for Special Permit) has not prevented excess lighting from being one of the most mentioned problems.
- A lesson from the process problems in the past is that solutions inherent in the design are superior to regulations.

Neighborhood Concerns:

Traffic

- High turnover use, such as retail, would be an inappropriate choice due to its impact on traffic.
- We would not like to see traffic from the development regularly use the neighborhood streets, which, as stated above, are not amenable to much traffic. There is desire not to develop the paper street on the map across from Millett Street and to limit or discontinue use of the Woodside entrance.

Noise

- Desire for mitigation of HVAC, truck route, loading dock, and other noise problems mentioned above wherever possible, inherent in the design of new construction or renovations. We also seek effective noise-dampening structures around existing sources of noise, such as the boiler room and HVAC.
- Concern that construction schedules, including any blasting, be regulated and monitored, to assure quality of life in evenings and on weekends.
- Concern about creating noise hot spots, like smoking areas or the outdoor lunch/coffee break areas insufficiently isolated from the neighborhood.

Construction

- Models exist for monitoring construction noise and should be applied to the project.
- Concern that the cost of impact remediation is planned for in the design and budgets.
- At the July 1 meeting, the group did not want to see one area take a hit, (i.e. move something away from one area to the detriment of another.)

Environmental

- Concern about added pollution settling down into our neighborhoods, both during and after construction.

Open Space

- Questions:

- 1) What is meant by open space versus public use space?
- 2) Is the Town considering exchanging open (wooded) space with what is now some other kind of space to keep the percentage? To what limit? In most cases, this is strongly opposed by the neighborhoods.
 - There is consensus that the open space ratio (about 50%) should be kept and protected from future development. The Selectmen's policy statement included a commitment "to maintaining the parcel's present proportion of open space, and to increasing its density of development only to gain limited affordable housing."
 - There is concern about what these limits are and what can be set up to protect these areas, especially the wooded buffers with the neighborhood..
 - Replacing woods with landscaping is strongly opposed.
 - There is a desire to see the woods cared for. (Bittersweet, which twines into and chokes trees, is growing in the woods along Summer St. and elsewhere.)

Remediation

- Maintain or increase current buffer areas as woods.
- There is some support for using the existing hospital buildings as a way to limit construction and preserve open space. There is also support for changes to the existing building, especially when it would help reduce the impact of site operations on the neighborhood.
- We would like deed, zoning, or other restrictions that will protect the neighborhood and can't expire, leaving our community unprotected.
- Concern that we be included in and kept abreast of up-coming decisions on the site regarding our expressed concerns, especially those affecting areas near property lines.

Housing

- There are various opinions about housing, but it is agreed that the scale and density of any housing should be appropriate to that of the neighborhood.

Long Term Goals

- Neighborhood desire is to see the Town keep most of the land, especially buffer areas. Selling the land raises issues as to how neighborhood protections can be kept in place.
- In the effort to create an asset for the Town and the townspeople of Arlington, we hope that the planners and the Town will give sufficient consideration to what will enhance our neighborhood and the natural beauty and location of this site.
- We would like to see the Town establish maximum financial use goals for the development. This is to prevent income-generating changes in hard economic times, at the expense of neighborhood protection.
- Given all that our community has gone through over the years with the various Symmes developments and owners, we seek neighborhood protection processes that continue past the design and construction stage. We care about health, safety, noise, and aesthetic issues. We want to keep whatever bits of woods and quality of life remain here.

Ongoing Impact Identification and Protection:

Last September the Symmes Advisory Committee voted to add neighborhood analysis to the responsibilities of the Financial Analysis Working Group. This is a proposal of how this analysis could be accomplished using the information that has just been presented. It borrows liberally from the methodology used by the Public Use Working Group in their May 1st presentation. The final version of this will be developed in conjunction with the full Financial Analysis Working Group.

The criteria for the impact worksheet are derived from the neighborhood meetings, emails, and interviews with long-time residents. The criteria are broken down into at least three categories: Traffic factors, Noise Factors and Neighborhood Quality Factors. For each proposed use, the criteria are ranked based on the impact that use has on that particular factor.

For example, under Traffic factors, it might look like the following:

Criteria	Ranking
Number of Commuters	
Deliveries Required	
Turnover Rate	

The noise factors could include:

Criteria	Ranking
Proximity to Neighbors	
Outside Usage	
External Machinery	

The neighborhood quality factors could include:

Criteria	Ranking
Protection of existing open space	
Provides sustainable protection	
Environmental Impact	

All this would add up to an impact ranking.