

## **Symmes Advisory Committee Press Release 5/30/02**

Arlington residents have responded enthusiastically to the Symmes Advisory Committee's survey. Approximately 2,000 completed surveys have been received from the roughly 19,000 sent to all households in the town. The survey is the first of many outreach efforts, and was intended to solicit ideas from the community on potential uses for the Symmes site.

The survey invited suggestions in four categories, within a mixed-use environment: medical use, commercial use, public use, and residential use. Over 40 different ideas were suggested by respondents for possible medical uses, over 75 for commercial, over 65 for public uses, and over 35 for residential. The ideas were varied, often unique, and represented a wide range of interests.

Doctors' offices appeared most often for medical use, being suggested by about 50% of those responding to this category. Roughly 30% of the respondents wanted to see an emergency room, followed by a clinic/outpatient facility (21%) and lab facilities (18%). There was also interest in having alternative medical services, such as holistic health care, acupuncture, yoga, and massage for preventative and curative purposes. A number of respondents stated they wanted a full-service hospital at the Symmes site, with several acknowledging that this was not economically feasible. Other ideas in the medical use category included a children's room for children recovering from loss and a medical library.

The most often suggested ideas for commercial uses were research space and office space, being suggested by about 23% and 17% (respectively) of the respondents in this category. These were followed by biotechnology companies (8%). Other ideas for commercial uses included professional offices, a community center, retail space, a day care facility, an incubator for startup businesses, a restaurant with a view and a casino.

Open space appeared most often for public use, being suggested by about 30% of those responding to this category. A park (24%), walking/hiking trails (15%) and a swimming pool (14%) were also frequently suggested. Other public use ideas included a recreation facility, Town offices, a sculpture park, an amphitheater, an arts complex, a dog park, an observatory and a museum.

Affordable housing was most cited for residential use, being suggested by 30% of the respondents in this category. Many of the respondents that listed affordable housing also stated that this housing should be available to Arlington residents only. Other respondents stated that they did not want any affordable housing at the site. Elderly housing (12%) and assisted living (10%) were the next most cited ideas. Other residential use ideas included luxury condos, rent-to-own housing and apartments for artists.

The category most often left blank was commercial use, with about 33% of those responding to the survey listing nothing for this category. Medical use was left blank by 14%, public use by 25% and residential use by 21%.

Roughly 13% of those responding to the survey did not want to see any residential uses at the Symmes site. This was followed by 9% who wanted to see no commercial uses, 8% for no public uses, and 3% for no medical uses at the site.

The survey represents an initial assessment of the need for potential uses at the Symmes site. Along with need, the fit of potential uses (with the town, neighborhood and site conditions) and the feasibility (of financial and long-range planning issues) will be evaluated. The process of evaluation and eventual selection will take place through public meetings and community design charrettes. The Symmes consultant team, once selected later this month, will work with the Advisory Committee and the Arlington Redevelopment Board to guide this process.

The Symmes Advisory Committee is tremendously grateful to all those who took part in the survey, and invites everyone's continued participation in the process of decision-making for the Symmes property.