

Design Workshop #1 "Discovery"

Following is a compilation of public comments received during the first Design Workshop to develop a Reuse and Feasibility Plan for the former Symmes Hospital site in Arlington, Massachusetts. The workshop, sponsored by the Symmes Advisory Committee, was held at the Symmes site on Tuesday, July 30, 2002, and was facilitated by the Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. consultant team. The workshop was attended by approximately 250 people.

The directive of the workshop was to gain input from the community on ideas for reuse of the site, and to gain an understanding of community concerns and potential impacts from redevelopment of the site. As part of this initial "Discovery" phase, participants were provided with a list of questions to provide input in the following areas:

- The types of **land uses** that people would like to see as part of redevelopment of the former Symmes Hospital property;
- **Site assets** that should be preserved or highlighted with redevelopment;
- **Concerns** within the community that should be considered while preparing a redevelopment plan; and
- **Questions** for the Symmes Advisory Committee and the consultant team to respond to at future workshops.

Responses to the questions are summarized in the following sections, and are provided in the order in which they were received. Comments that were of a similar nature have been consolidated, and are annotated as such. *Items in italics are comments added to the recording sheets during individual discussions following the meeting, and are transcribed verbatim.*

Desired Uses

- A use that entails minimal change to the natural environment (4 similar comments)
- "Built Green" – energy efficient buildings, a holistic approach to the site redevelopment, promoting a sustainable lifestyle (funding is available)
- Affordable housing (14 similar comments)
 - Affordable housing can be profitable
 - Real need (200 applicants for 6 affordable units at 30 Water Street)

Desired Uses (Continued)

- Development of subsidized housing in the rehabbed nurses residence
 - Perhaps a joint project for organizations such as Caritas and the Arlington Housing Authority
- Commercial Development (4 similar comments)
 - Commercial uses can co-exist with open space (2 similar comments)
 - Generate revenue without overburdening Town services
 - Job creation
- Senior uses, medical uses serving seniors
- Use Symmes to allow a transfer of development rights for developers interested in building elsewhere
- Restaurant (2 similar comments)
- High end condominiums (2 similar comments)
- Public viewing areas (3 similar comments)
- Multipurpose conference center (3 similar comments)
- Family resource center (6 similar comments)
 - Indoor/outdoor space
 - Similar to the Tot Stop (recently closed)
- Museum and cultural center
- Co-housing (3 similar comments)
 - *Could meet many of the intergenerational concerns, affordable housing concerns, revenue for land bought by co-housing community, establishment of a neighborhood.*
- Emergency and general medical (4 similar comments)
 - *Holistic alternatives therapies, i.e. massage, acupuncture, etc.*
- A diversity of housing opportunities (3 similar comments)
- Cultural facilities – teaching; performance (3 similar comments)
- Cyrus E. Dallin Museum
- Multi-generational activities (4 similar comments)
- Retirement/senior housing
- A neighborhood environment (3 similar comments)
 - For diverse incomes
 - With a multi-generational mix of uses and services
 - Community buildings
- Continued mass transit/bus access
- Buffer between hard surfaces and abutters
- For parking, consider a parking garage or tiered parking
- Facility for foster children – Hope Meadows as a model
- Open space/recreation – revenue generation
- Recreation Center (4 similar comments)
 - Boys & Girls club
- Swimming pool
- Fire Station on Summer Street – centralized services
- Community room (3 similar comments)
- Class A office space
- Child care

Desired Uses (Continued)

- Medical services - refer to the Santa Maria model
- High quality emergency/urgent care facility

- *Consider all-day parking with shuttle*
- *Non-profit startup (In-defense e.g.)*
- *Playground and playing fields*
- *Garage shop—business incubator*
- *Hotel*
- *A playground, with separate areas for over 6/under 6*
- *A small space for the Arlington PTO Thrift Shop*
- *To make money – a few cell phone towers*
 - *The ones that look like trees*
 - *The birds won't fly into and die*
- *Multi-Use Community Center –*
 - *Clinic (medical)*
 - *Day care*
 - *Family resource center*
 - *Art museum*
 - *Performing arts space*
 - *Senior center*
 - *Teen center*
 - *Classrooms/continuing education*
 - *Studio space for artists*
 - *Performance center*
 - *Meeting/conference/gathering facility*
 - *With very limited retail to serve the center*
 - *Income generating with a community benefit*
 - *Opportunities for start-up businesses to meet, example- In-defense Inc., a non-profit self defense for women.*
- *Class A office space and amenities close by – many businesses leave Arlington as they grow*
- *Outdoor event center and sculpture gardens*
 - *Think about abutters!*
- *Buffer zone in conservation restriction*

How to (for all uses) i.e. vs. what

- *Sustainability*
 - *for building/utilities*
 - *drainage*
 - *energy use*
 - *open space*
- *Start early in planning process*
- *(Mass technology collaborative) \$\$\$*

Site Assets

- Woods at the bottom of the hill
- A large percent of community willing to participate in process – can leverage
- Existing building equipment with operating rooms
 - Building readiness for outpatient or ambulatory surgery
- Existing community medical staff is ready, willing and able to refer patients for/to a “diagnostic center” (not in Cambridge or Burlington)
- Offers the possibility for family care medical practice with adequate support facilities and equipment
- The natural wilderness environment (3 similar comments)
- The opportunity to develop land in a positive way
- Large site-- 18 acres (4 similar comments)
- Views (5 similar comments)
- Lots of money within 5 miles
- Sale of the property will generate revenues
- Sense of community
- Doctors/hospital
- Creates an image of Arlington

Concerns

- Over development of open space
- Medical disappearing (2 similar comments)
- Town spending money to develop gas/electric utilities and access roads, want developers to fund NOT the Town
- The density of apartments/housing
- The site is prominent, will need design guidelines
- Stringent deed restrictions to maintain control over redevelopment
- Site’s integration with the surrounding neighborhoods
- Pay back debt – we don’t want to have more overrides
- Maintain the natural environment
- Look to needs in future (2 similar comments)
- Town can’t afford risk
- Preserve views of the site through design guidelines
- Need to keep control of development if property is sold
- Don’t want just wealthy to benefit from site (3 similar comments)
- Impacts of construction on abutters
- Open space and affordable housing are not income producing and may not get enough weight in redevelopment considerations
 - Statement in Town mandate puts open space against affordable housing

Concerns (Continued)

- Group Ages 0-6 doesn't have consideration (e.g. Tot Spot) (2 similar comments)
- Need an emergency room in Arlington
- Equal access to medical care is needed – Medicare
- Affordability, diversity (of needs), needs consideration (4 similar comments)
- Overdevelopment – how does it affect Town? (2 similar comments)
- How does the rest of this Town fit into use of this site?
- Asphalt too close to abutters, causes drainage problems

- *Town should keep its commitment to build or produce more than 60 residential units (at least 15 of these is promised to be affordable). The Town must not submit to developer and realtor pressure to produce more than 60 units total*
- *Who will take care of no-man's land on perimeter? Let abutters take care of it.*
- *Pedestrian access. Serves as a model for the rest of Town*
- *Traffic impact on abutters - close off upper Brattle Street to all but abutters*
- *Save woods at bottom of hill*
- *Please provide a definition of affordable housing using specific income figures; and also, suggest possible Federal and State funding available to support/subsidize it*
- *Consider impact on a large influx of students that would have on Stratton School (do so before rebuilding designs are created)*
- *Loss of jobs to Arlington residents if current facility closes*
- *My concern is that there will be a temptation to over-develop the site, either with too much building density, or high-profile buildings to capture the view. Please consider this site is in a quiet neighborhood of primarily single-family homes. Consider integration of plans into character of neighborhood*
- *Arlington has become a "MEDICAL BEIRUT" needs a local diagnostic center, simple surgery/procedure center and an "urgent care center to meet acute elderly and pediatric care needs.*
- *Separate a revenue generating portion of Symmes from a community-supporting part (e.g., Tot Spot, cultural center etc.) and ensure Town control of the latter*

Questions to Address During Future Workshops

- Financing?
- Will the site be sold or leased?
- What will entire Town look like in 5 years? Infrastructure, other sites in Town?
- What are the different returns for the different uses that are being considered?
- Hospital, medical facility?
- Will it be affordable for all?
- What is the percentage of affordable housing at Mill Street and other locations?
- Who can afford the affordable housing?
- What are the uses that generate the most money?



Questions (Continued)

- Can YMCA/YWCA build a facility in Arlington or not (because of the boys/girls club)? If they can, then perhaps they can provide a community room, child playroom, etc.