

Community Advisory Committee
6/10/14
Meeting notes

CAC members present: Commissioner Andy LaBarre (chair), Amy Freundl, Vickie Wellman, Robb Burroughs, Greg Dill, Jennifer Hall

County Staff Present: Mary Jo Callan, Bob Tetens, Stephen Wade, Paul Montagno

Consultants present: Cheryl Zuellig, Kathleen Duffy, Alicia Adams

Others present: Jermaine Ruffin, Debbie Neumann, Jaye Harrer, Lev Levin, Eric Meres, Donnell Wyche, Denise Loviska, Shirley Beck, Niles Berry, Sue Symington, Kathleen Starks, James Daniel, Isaac Sterling, Kate Waissi

Background

Mr. Andy LaBarre, County Commissioner, gave some background of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), noting that the CAC formed last fall to make recommendations regarding the 13 acre Platt Rd. County owned site. The group met 3 times and brought a resolution to the County Board of Commissioners which provided broad general recommendations. The CAC must ultimately bring back specific recommendations to the Board, which they may or may not act upon. He noted there is additional information on a webpage on the County website.

Ms. Mary Jo Callan, Director of the Office of Community and Economic Development, provided some additional background. She noted that three years ago the County secured a Sustainable Communities Planning Challenge Grant from HUD. This grant has focused, in part, on housing, transportation, and economic development along the Washtenaw Avenue corridor which is immediately adjacent to this site. There is a specific focus on creating opportunities for the underserved.

The next step in the process for the Platt Road site is to create a really robust community engagement process. The County could have just sold the site, but decided that there were community initiatives that could be advanced by leveraging this asset. We must determine what the community should do with this asset. MSHDA has donated funds to help with a community planning process.

There were a range of options in the resolution adopted by the Board [of County Commissioners] in February 2014. The Board will have to take action on the disposition of the site. The point of today's meeting is to start to talk about the outreach and engagement process. She noted that they would like to engage everyone.

Commissioner LaBarre said that they would go around the room for public comment at the end of the meeting so people could comment with the knowledge of the full presentation.

Presentation (power point attached)

Ms. Cheryl Zuellig, Planning Consultant with SmithGroupJJR, gave the back ground of SmithGroupJJR. She noted that they recently worked on the Right-of-Way study for Relmagine Washtenaw. She also noted that they would be facilitating the Platt Road site charrette as well as another on the corridor at Golfside and Washtenaw. This work will also include a Target Market Analysis (TMA) for both sites. Initial findings from the TMA will be ready by the time of the charrettes. The TMA will help determine what will be supported on the site.

Ms. Zuellig stated that planning the community outreach piece is the biggest part of planning a charrette.

Ms. Kathleen Duffy, Planning Consultant with LSL, described the charrette process, noting that is it a multi-day community engagement process with designers that will take the public's ideas and produce drawing that illustrate those ideas.

Ms. Zuellig said that the professionals staffing the charrette are the "pencils" for the community's ideas. It is your plan that they will help you develop. They help to take people's ideas and articulate them visually.

Ms. Zuellig mentioned that there are opportunities through the 3 day process to have meetings or discussions with the CAC or other stakeholder groups.

Commissioner LaBarre noted that many people are concerned that there is already a plan [for the site]. He said that the only thing that has been done was to set the stage to create a plan. The plan will ultimately need to be approved by the Board [of County Commissioners]. There will be many opportunities for public input.

Comments and questions

Mr. Robb Burroughs, CAC Member, asked what the TMA will look at.

Ms. Zuellig explained that the TMA looks at not just the local market but a potential market draw area. It will determine feasibility of a variety of different uses based on consumer preferences for housing, transportation, and other consumer activities.

Ms. Vickie Wellman, CAC Member, noted that she was glad to be there and is always impressed with the process.

Ms. Kathleen Starks, a member of the public, indicated that the part of Canterbury that they live on is just on the other side of this site. She noted that everyone on that part of the road is concerned that their property values might go down or that their taxes will go up. Also people who have little children that use the park might be concerned for security or that there might be additional late night activity in the park.

A member of the public asked about the history of the site.

Mr. Greg Dill, Director of Facilities, noted that the property has sat vacant since they built the new children's facility at Hogback. Previously the site had been a juvenile detention facility for a long time. They have recently taken down the buildings. They will seed the site and wait for wait for the Board [of County commissioners] to decide what to do with it.

A member of the public asked if anything had been discussed about the site being used as a bird rescue.

Mr. Dill indicated that there had been discussions, but the previously existing facilities were not adequate for that use.

Pastor Donnell Wyche, Associate Pastor Vineyard Church, asked if it's mixed use, what does that do to the traffic? He feels like traffic has increased by 40 to 50% [since the new light was installed at Washtenaw and Platt] and vehicles are going much faster.

Commissioner LaBarre noted that it is a City [of Ann Arbor] road, but we will bring the concern to their attention.

Pastor Wyche asked about the potential capacity of the site in terms of density. He knows that developers will try to get the maximum density they can. What will that do to traffic? He also asked what the County would do with the proceeds if they sell the property.

Mr. Dill notes that the county policy is that the funds would go directly into the general fund.

Mr. Eric Mathis, Project Grow, explained about the community garden that currently exists in County Farm Park. He indicated that about 1% of the people in the area do their gardening there.

Ms. Jaye Harrer, a member of the public said they live on Shrewberry. They abut the County property. She wanted to know if there would be an access road coming into the neighborhood. She indicated she was also concerned about property values. She was also conferenced about the effect on wildlife in the park. Lastly she wondered if there was to be housing there, would there be additional security for the park.

Ms. Wellman stated that affordable housing can mean a lot of different things to many different people. She indicated that a developer would not have the same values as the community. She hoped that if we can all dream positively together, as opposed to being scared, we can create a plan that will accommodate all issues.

Mr. Dill asked about the potential for input into the TMA.

Ms. Zuellig noted that the study would not be finalized till after the charrette.

Ms. Callan noted that Commissioner LaBarre and Commissioner Rabhi have done their best to make this an open public process. Additionally, we want to make sure that this is also a process that can provide information to people. If people have specific questions or concerns the County might be able to provide that information.

The final ask from the meeting was that everyone consider what people need to be engaged in this process. People were asked to think about what groups the county could or should be talking to. People were asked to provide feedback about the best ways to get the word out to all stakeholders and if they were willing to help. The County along with the consultants for the Charrette will be developing an outreach plan.