

# INVEST NORTH HILLS

## Advisory Committee Meeting #2

February 2, 2015

### Meeting Minutes

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#### Planning/Design Team Members in Attendance:

Kyle Speece (Pennrose Properties)  
Kyla Bayer, Joel Johnson and Val Yancey (MCHA)  
Garlen Capita and Jaque Camp (WRT)

#### Advisory Committee Member Attendance:

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|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Barbara Allen           | 12. Liesel Schwarz                      |
| 2. Betty R. Blue           | 13. Melissa Monser                      |
| 3. Chalene Holmes          | 14. Melvin D. Dinkins Sr.               |
| 4. Connie Green            | 15. Michael Lee                         |
| 5. Cynthia Hall            | 16. Mildred Cottom                      |
| 6. Derek Dureka            | 17. Na'Dequa Holmes                     |
| 7. Gloria Wilson           | 18. Neil Rines (Agreement not returned) |
| 8. Jan Marie Circosta      | 19. Sheila Brogden (Dominick Brogden)   |
| 9. Jerry Johnson           | 20. Sherry L. Rivers                    |
| 10. Julius J. Bertrand Jr. | 21. Wanda Robbins                       |
| 11. Kelly A. Coleman       |   |

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#### Meeting Notes:

##### I. Introductions

- a. New Committee members who were not at first Advisory Committee meeting received a folder when they walked in with reference materials and a name badge.
- b. Review of why we're here:
  - i. The Montgomery County Housing Authority (MCHA) selected Pennrose Properties, along with the planning and design firm Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT) to work with the community to develop a plan to redevelop North Hills Manor. As part of that process, WRT is leading an engagement process to build consensus about how the site should be redeveloped.
  - ii. The goal of the Advisory Committee is to help us identify the community's challenges, assets, and opportunities and to act as community liaisons (e.g., disseminating information to neighbors, attending public meetings, etc)
- c. New Committee Members – self introductions:
  - i. **Jan Marie Brooks** – New East Oreland resident – wants to be informed about the changes to the neighborhood  
**Michael Lee** – Long time North Hills resident.  
**Jerry Johnson** – North Hills Resident – attending out of concern for the community.  
**Mildred Cottom** – NH resident from Abington Township

##### I. Overview of the Planning Process

- WRT presented a brief overview of the planning process and previous session.
- a. Goal of this 6-month planning process is to reach community consensus
  - b. At the end of the process (approximately) (May 2015) the goal is to have a preferred development plan
  - c. Joel Johnson, MCHA Executive Director described the need to redevelop the North Hills Manor site which is 63 years old and has outdated systems

##### II. Work Session/Facilitated Discussion

WRT led the group through a facilitated discussion based on Survey results to date.

- a. Overview of survey development and distribution
  - Advisory Committee work session #1 helped the team develop questions for the survey that has now been distributed to all Manor residents and neighbors.
  - MCHA described the process for distribution of the surveys.
  - +/- 350 surveys sent out; 83 responses received so far; 17 from North Hills Manor
- b. **Discussion:** Results of the surveys to date were distributed and discussed. Participants were asked to consider topics for focus groups based on the survey responses.
  - Survey indicates more adult households in the neighborhood, more families with children in North Hills Manor.
  - Open space, community connections, and the family nature of the community are seen as positives.
  - Visitor parking is a concern. It was brought up that Manor residents do not have assigned parking spaces. Neighborhood residents have driveway parking, but their visitors often use Manor parking spaces.
  - The appearance of the Manor buildings and some neighborhood homes is seen as a negative.
  - Lack of sidewalks in neighborhood is a safety concern.
  - Pedestrian safety is a concern; through traffic, high speeds, ignoring stop signs.
  - Discussion as well as survey results pointed to safety issues on Linden, Walnut, Chelsea, and Logan; signs are there but drivers don't pay attention
  - 'My sister was hit by a car on Linden'
  - Team brought up that there are a number of design interventions that can make those streets safer. Some analysis would need to occur to see what would work best here.

**Expressed Desire for:**

- Dog Park
  - While dogs are allowed at the Manor, many residents do not have pets. This is actually more a concern about dog owners walking pets in the neighborhood and not cleaning up after them.
  - There are no dogs allowed signs at the community center
  - Upper Dublin Township has a dog park
- Amenities
  - Many concerns about pool size, hours, capacity.
  - City summer camps "take over" the pool and max out the capacity, then neighborhood and Manor kids are turned away.
  - Actually, pool never hit maximum capacity in 2014, and only 2 days at capacity in 2013 (July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend). Limited hours are due more to staffing issues in late summer as lifeguards, many who are college students return to school.
  - Most felt neighborhood amenities are of fair to very good quality.
- Most feel very safe in the neighborhood
  - Concerns discussed in meeting were mostly around "stranger hanging around".
  - Long list of concerns including strangers, traffic, and drugs expressed in survey comments.
- Litter is a big concern

- Also problems with dumping.
- Source of litter: from food at gas station, ice cream truck, people hanging out who don't live in the manor
- Areas with litter issue include: corner of the property, basketball court, parking are off of Logan, all over; dumping in North Hills Manor dumpster by people who do not live there

**Survey Indicates:**

- Very strong sense of community; residents want to stay. This is a point of pride
- 'Before we were basically all one family, this is not a transient neighborhood'
- Concerns about the redevelopment project.
  - Both residents and neighbors expressed concerns about appearance and impact on residents of the Manor.
  - Residents of the neighborhood are concerned about impacts on property value.
  - Both are concerned about potential loss of open space.
  - Overtime the neighborhood residents have upgraded their home but the Manor has not had improvements
  - 'I don't care for the look of the newer homes'
- North Hills Manor unit design (Questions for Manor residents only)
  - Dislike the windows. Specifically location and number (too few).
  - Want dedicated space for washer and dryer behind closeable doors.
  - Dislike kitchen size, appliances.
  - 'Even if you live in the Manor we take care of our place'
- Other Questions/Comments:
  - ***Are environmental issues something that should be part of focus group discussions?***  
MCHA responded that it has conducted prior studies of the site and it addressed any environmental issues as necessary.
  - ***Who will manage this development?***  
MCHA responded that Penrose Properties has a development and a management side. The site management will be a partnership between MCHA and Penrose.
  - ***Will there be new rules for the tenants living at North Hills Manor? Will tenants be a part of creating the new lease?***  
There needs to be more outreach to tenants. MCHA responded that MCHA will have a North Hills Manor residents meeting at a future date to address resident concerns.
  - ***What is the long-term incentive for Penrose to maintain the site?***  
Penrose responded that they want to be a good partner and protect their firm's reputation and investment. MCHA added that there are compliance and management terms that will also guide how the new development is managed.
  - ***Can the (development team) distribute the agenda prior to each meeting?***  
Yes an effort will be made but note that not all Advisory Committee members have access to email.

- Note-taker's favorite additional comment:
  - "My shovel is ready. Let's get going."

### III. Discussion on Next Steps and AC Assignments

#### a. Surveys

We will be accepting additional surveys until Tuesday, January 20th. Advisory Committee members were asked to go door-to-door to encourage neighbors to complete and return their surveys so their input can be included.

#### b. Focus Group Discussions

- i. To be held between January and February 2015.
- ii. Potential Issue Groups per Advisory Committee input include:
  - a. North Hills Manor - Design of the new units and specific site issues that impact resident's quality of life.
  - b. Neighborhood architectural character; property values
  - c. Community Assets / Community history.
  - d. Neighborhood Quality of life:
    - Public safety/policing
    - Litter
    - Traffic/ Speeding/Walkability
    - Dogs
- iii. Selection process for Focus Group participants?

#### Comments on Selection Process

- Advisory Committee members should each participate in only one focus group.
- Advisory Committee Members to each recruit 2-3 others from the Manor and the neighborhood to participate in focus group discussions.
- Each Focus Group discussion should have 10-15 participants.
- May want to vary meeting times to allow wider participation.
- Discussion of concern that Manor residents "are not being heard."

### IV. Wrap up / Next Meeting

Thank you for coming. To allow time for scheduling and implementation of the Focus Group discussions, we will be moving Advisory Committee Meeting #3 to April. Date and time will be communicated to the Committee as soon as the updated schedule is complete.