

INVEST NORTH HILLS

Advisory Committee Meeting #1

December 10, 2014

Meeting Minutes

Planning/Design Team Members in Attendance:

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

Advisory Committee Member Attendance:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. Avis Wanda McClinton (Agreement not returned) | 9. Gloria Wilson |
| 2. Barbara Allen | 10. Julius J. Betrand Jr. |
| 3. Betty R. Blue | 11. Kelly A. Coleman |
| 4. Chalene Holmes | 12. Liesel Schwarz |
| 5. Connie Green | 13. Melissa Monser |
| 6. Cynthia Hall | 14. Melvin D. Dinkins Sr. |
| 7. Derek Dureka | 15. Na'Dequa Holmes |
| 8. Dominick J. Brogden | 16. Neil Rines (Agreement not returned) |
| | 17. Sherry L. Rivers |

Absent:

- Allison Kelly
 - Curtis McDonald
 - Dana Williams
 - Nanaj Wall
-

Meeting Notes:

I. Introductions

- Everyone received a folder when they walked in with reference materials and a name badge.
- Why we're here:
 - 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.
 - 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)
- We want to know who is here and why you are interested in this process:
 - Joel Johnson** (Executive Director MCHA) – We're here to talk about North Hills Manor (a 50-unit public housing site). The buildings are over 60 years old, they are antiquated and becoming difficult to maintain in a cost effective way (e.g., systems are outdated, difficulty in finding parts for maintenance). We need to find a way to reinvest in the community and replace these homes so we brought in Pennrose, a national firm with a track record of affordable housing development throughout the nation.
 - Liesel Schwarz** (Neighborhood Resident) – New resident moved here in September who has been involved in her previous neighborhoods. She has a background in sustainable design/LEED.
 - Sheila Brogden** (Neighborhood Resident) – She has lived in the community for 10 years. Interested in change for community, the neighborhood needs to be improved (aesthetics, drug use, fighting, etc.)

- iv. **Dominick Brogden** (Neighborhood Resident) – He is interested in participating because whatever gets done will be in place for 50+ years. There may not be another chance in his lifetime to see redevelopment in the community.
- v. **Val Yancey** (MCHA) – She has worked at the North Hills Manor site for 15 years, excited to see residents get this opportunity.
- vi. **Neil Rines** (Neighborhood Resident) – Concerned about the construction of homes and what that will mean for community children access to recreation (right to recreation). Rental units will have an impact on some of the homeowners, even now some people are selling their homes in anticipation. The community deserves to have the option of where these units will go. He feels the community shouldn't have to sacrifice the pool or other open spaces for housing. 'This wouldn't happen in other predominately white communities.' *Joel Johnson reassured Mr. Rines that no one is being asked to sacrifice anything – there is no plan, that's why we're here. We're asking you to help us create the plan*
- vii. **Julius Bertrand Jr.** (Neighborhood Resident) – He has seen North Hills change 80% for the better. Glad to be part of the process.
- viii. **Avis Wanda McClinton** (Neighborhood Resident) – Landowner/Homeowner. She will be in this neighborhood when she is a senior, so there is a lot on the line. It's important to be involved in this process.
- ix. **Kyla Bayer** (MCHA) – Housing Authority Director of Development. She has worked in many communities and is interested to see what the group has to say.
- x. **Betty Blue** (Neighborhood Resident) – She plans on being a part of this neighborhood for a long time. She has a 12-year-old son and wants to know what is going on and how it will affect him.
- xi. **Sherry Rivers** (Neighborhood Resident) – She's interested in change, wants to better the community.
- xii. **Connie Green** (NHM Resident) – She's a 20+ year resident who wants to be involved so she can speak for the people and not be pressured by private homeowners.
- xiii. **Melvin Dinkins Sr.** (Neighborhood Resident) – He was born and raised in North Hills and remembers how much open space the community once had. Concerned about the pool and community center. This community is not in the city, it's a suburb. There has been a loss of open space (anecdote about wildlife displacement – deer walking through backyards, raccoons destroying part of a family member's roof, etc). He helped build a number of open spaces using grant funds throughout the community, but now they're starting to close. How long will the new buildings last? Right now they're brick and mortar, but a lot of new construction is wood – will that increase risk of fire, etc?
- xiv. **Gloria Wilson** (V.P. North Hills Tenant Council) – She is concerned for the community and the children. The community gets along, this is our home. She grew up here, her kid grew up here. Change is coming, we need change, and we need to have love for each other.
- xv. **Cynthia Hall** (President of North Hills Tenant Council) – Shew as born and raised in the community and is concerned about the quality of construction. When she grew up, people looked out for kids and there was more open space. The community needs more open spaces, community activities, and mentoring programs. There are issues with policing. Some of it is policing and some of it is harassment – kids have a hard time getting a start in life with a rap sheet.
- xvi. **Garlen Capita** (WRT) – Senior Associate and Urban Designer
- xvii. **Mary Morton** (WRT) – Urban Designer/Planner
- xviii. **Melissa Monser** (Neighborhood Resident) – She's here to represent the disabled community (and seniors who often have similar accessibility issues). Often, when people design buildings they don't design for disabled persons or they do it incorrectly. She loves North Hills.

- xix. **Derek Dureka** (Upper Dublin Parks & Recreation) – Parks Director. He is responsible for open spaces in the community. Leads the summer program. He loves all of the passion in the community and is interested to hear everyone’s thoughts.
- xx. **Barbara Allen** (Neighborhood Resident) – Born and Raised in the community.
- xxi. **Chalene Holmes** (NHM Resident) – She lives in the Manor and wants to be a voice for younger residents.
- xxii. **NaDequa Holmes** (NHM Resident) – We deserve to have a say and have great housing.
- xxiii. **Kyle Speece** (Senior Developer - Pennrose Properties) – He’s here to listen and is very excited about the level of engagement of residents in the community.
- xxiv. **Kelly Coleman** (Neighborhood Resident) – She is a life-long resident and parent and she’s glad to know there are no plans set in stone yet. She wants to hear the information first-hand.

II. Overview of the Planning Process

WRT presented a brief overview of the planning process.

- a. Goal of this 6-month planning process is to reach community consensus
- b. At the end of the process approximately 6-months (May 2015) the goal is to have a preferred development plan
- c. We recognize that you are busy and you need time to digest the information you will hear at Advisory Committee Meetings and public meetings, especially since whatever decisions are made will last a very long time.
- d. These Advisory Committee Meetings are an opportunity for us to run ideas by you before the entire community sees them at public meetings. We hope that you will continue to be engaged in this effort and help disseminate information to your neighbors.

III. Roles and Expectations of Committee Members

- a. We have developed a 1-page agreement describing your commitment as part of the Advisory Committee. The agreement states that you are willing to attend and participate in a productive manner in three (3) Advisory Committee Meetings and three (3) public meetings.
- b. As a member of the community and the Advisory Committee we need you to talk to your neighbors, let people know about what is going on, and answer questions.
- c. Sharing of your name and contact information is also part of this agreement. This will provide other community members with the information needed to contact you directly if they have questions or want more information about decisions being made.

IV. Work Session/Facilitated Discussion

WRT lead the group through a facilitated discussion on Survey Categories in order to develop a survey that will be distributed to the community. Participants discussed the types of questions that should be asked to residents on the survey?

- a. **Community Demographics:**
 - i. How long have you lived here?
 - ii. Age range (e.g., teen, young adult, adult, senior) – compare this to existing demographic data. Necessary because different populations have different needs (e.g., young families and seniors)
 - iii. Do you have school-aged children?
- b. **Community Assets & Values:**
 - i. Do you consider the neighborhood walkable?

1. *Comment* – It’s a walkable, kid-friendly community. Kids are looked after and people are welcomed in very quickly.
 2. Discussion on walkability vs safety vs community cohesion
- ii. Do you think there is a strong sense of community (values/cohesion), where people feel welcomed?
1. *Comment* – very safe here – kids can walk safely to corner store and other amenities
 2. *Comment* – Visibility is high – not a lot of fences and other parts of the neighborhood are open. One of the reasons she moved here because she liked that she could work in her yard and talk to her neighbors and passersby)
 3. *Comment* – Long wooden 6’ fence behind houses on Mill Road fronting the recreation center. It feels like they are segregating themselves from the rest of the neighborhood (likened to the Great Wall of China). Can that fence come down? Is it on private property (A – yes). When he sees the fence it reminds him of segregation, of the dark past America has in reference to race relations.
 4. *Comment* – On why the fence was constructed – the community was predominately black so the residents on Mill Road put up the fence to keep themselves private from the community and keep kids from cutting through backyards to get to school.
 5. *Comment* – Although the fences are on private property, the Parks Department, who owns the property on the other side, could try to work with those residents to discuss options about the fence. This is an opportunity for other partnerships outside of the Housing Authority.
- iii. How safe/easily accessible are amenities inside and outside of the community?
- iv. How safe is the community (do you feel safe, lighting, eyes on the street, etc)
1. *Comment* – I would like to continue to see the neighborhood remain quiet as it has been for the last 12 years. Consider rules to help maintain that quiet.
- v. How do you feel about the location of the Manor?
1. *Comment* – Could we consider swapping properties – spread it out in the community instead of just in one spot. This would go with the idea that we’re all together in this as a community. Integrate the housing into the community.
- c. **Community Assets & Values:**
- i. Where are people currently shopping? Is it convenient, can you get meet your needs with shopping within a certain distance?
 1. *Comment* – Do people want more retail?
 - ii. Does your family use existing recreational amenities? – if so, how often do you use them? What is their value to you and your community?
 1. *Comment* – I see the pool as something that is only used a couple of months out of the year – how much better would it be to have an amenity that could be used year-round, perhaps an indoor recreation center?
 2. *Comment* – Children are often the ones utilizing the pool, we should make sure they are included in whatever survey we administer
 - a. A) we will ask about the household/family rather than single individuals
 - b. Follow up - Get data from Derek Dureka (Upper Dublin Parks & Recreation, Parks Director) about pool usage/demographics and the cost of operating the pool each year to address questions about whether or not the pool is losing money and is not well used.

3. *Comment* – it’s not necessarily about how much the pool is used, it’s about the community value it adds.

V. Comments/Discussion

- a. Are income restrictions still in place? – A) there are laws in place dictating how much a person/family can make to be qualified to live in public housing, once you qualify you are required to pay 30% of income for housing.
- b. When I (neighborhood resident) was doing demographic surveys for grants (open space), we were considered a poverty-stricken community in part because of elderly people in the community. Shouldn’t a lot of those seniors be in public housing?
- c. How will this affect homeowners? (Property value)
- d. What will be the policy for relocation/return after development?
- e. Don’t just focus on recreational opportunities for children, what about walking parks, opportunities for adults and seniors?
- f. What age group are we focusing on? – A) ideally, the plan will address the needs/concerns of diverse populations (families, youth, adults, seniors...)
- g. To Kyle Speece (Pennrose) – Have you ever made housing developments look better?
 - i. A) Good point, yes. This was presented at the first meeting, but we will make a point to present the work both of our firms (Pennrose and WRT) have done at the next meeting.
- h. People are our values/assets – strengthen and empower these people.
- i. No neighborhood group or association right now.
- j. We want to change the perception of the project – we don’t want people to know it’s something different from other housing in the neighborhood; it should blend into the neighborhood.
- k. Break the stigma – maybe remove the sign that signifies that the Manor is public housing. The sign triggers something in your mind that it is different. Perhaps change the name – “Manor” seems to be used on many public housing sites.
 - i. A – this a good point. I think we can all agree that something needs to be done to remove the stigma of public housing. This may be achieved when you see the potential design of new housing that allows it to blend into the neighborhood. We understand that the physical look of the building is very important, but so is the branding of the place – we need to consider rebranding the public housing site – something that removes that stigma.
- l. The neighborhood should remain safe. Right now it’s a close knit community – when something happens people speak up and tell (referring to the Manor).

VI. Wrap up

Thank you for coming, we appreciate your input, the next meeting will be January 13th at 6:30pm. We will follow-up with you on next steps and the survey. Please leave us your signed copy of the Advisory Committee agreement form and also make sure that you signed in and that we have your correct contact information.