



Mt. Ephraim Brownfield Area-Wide Plan

COMMUNITY MEETING #2

Date: February 21, 2017
Place: Virtua Hospital – Kelly Room, 1000 Atlantic Avenue, Camden
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Objective: Obtain community input on potential reuse concepts for neighborhood brownfield sites

Participants: (from sign in sheet):

John, Isabel William	Schenine Mitchell, EPA
Margaret A. Haye	Chuck Valentine, HACC
Hardera Bey	Namibia El, UCC
Rita Hughes	Valerie Jones
Barbara Olynit	M. El
Joe Sewar	Mary Anne Harris
Lavern William	Chrystal Atwater
Rose Reid-Bay	Rashaan Hornsby, HABA
Barbara Peters	Leonard Hall
Eugene, Minnie Austin	Malcolm Byrd
Sean M. Brown	Tanya Reed
Sharei Pollitt	Lynette Chalmus
Keith Carver	Pauline Bey
Daniel Johnson	F. M. Ingram
Stephanie Burwill	M. Davis
Sandra Cooper	Amir Khan
Sabina Byck, EPA	Jim Harveson

Consultant Team: Mary Morton, WRT; Woo Kim, WRT; Leah Yasenck, BRS; David Kutner, NJ Future

MEETING SUMMARY

James Harveson, Camden Redevelopment Authority, opened the meeting, noted that this was the second community meeting. He indicated that the Mt. Ephraim Choice Neighborhood project, which encompasses the Liberty Park; Whitman Park; and Centerville neighborhoods, is an EPA funded project. The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative is a program of the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and is intended to promote a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation.

Participants introduced themselves. Attendees included area businesses owners and long-time residents.

Leah Yasenck, BRS, indicated that the goal of the project is to work with the community to address brownfields sites – sites that are either contaminated or are perceived to be contaminated, that, as a result, may have challenges related to redevelopment.

Participants expressed concern about contamination, how long, which sites, what is the nature of the contamination, how do the sites get addressed. Participants wanted to know if resources are available for site cleanup in the event that contamination extends beyond the boundaries of a parcel. Leah indicated that at the present, most sites on the inventory have no environmental investigations available. The first step in determining environmental issues is a Preliminary Assessment (Phase 1). This is a look at the historical use of the site and surrounding areas, a visual inspection of the site, and

other non-intrusive research. The next step is a Phase II / Site Investigation, where soil would be sampled to confirm or deny the presence of contamination and determine what type of contamination is present. This is then frequently followed by a Remedial Investigation to determine the extent of the contamination, and determine whether the contamination has impacted groundwater. This is followed by a Remedial Action Workplan, which lays out the preferred option for cleaning up the site, based on the intended reuse of the site.

Leah briefly reviewed the outcomes of the first public meeting that occurred on November 29th. The purpose of that meeting was to obtain community input regarding brownfield site reuse options on the larger “catalyst” sites. Participants expressed a clear preference for light industrial type development on these sites because of the job-creation potential.

Leah noted that the purpose of the current meeting is to identify the community’s interest in potential redevelopment approaches, what the community’s redevelopment needs are and what reuse options are financially feasible. The process is being guided by a steering committee that has been appointed by the Mayor and comprised of neighborhood leaders, city, and agency officials. Three public meetings are anticipated to enable the project team to work directly with residents to create the Mt. Ephraim neighborhood brownfields reuse plan.

Leah provided an overview of the Market Potential Analysis conducted to determine financially feasible reuse options. In order to assess potential market demand, it was necessary to evaluate an area much larger than the Mt. Ephraim neighborhood to obtain the financial data that was needed. The analysis encompassed the area within a 5-mile radius of the neighborhood, extending into Philadelphia. The analysis evaluated local employment, transportation, land use patterns, and demographic characteristics to determine brownfields redevelopment potential. The analysis indicated a regional demand for warehouse/distribution uses and a more restrained demand potential for a limited amount of research and development/high-tech space. The study also evaluated mixed-use commercial development and neighborhood retail but the regional demand for such uses is limited.

Mary Morton, WRT, conducted a live, immediate-response, survey as she reviewed redevelopment options for the two catalyst sites and the three smaller-scale brownfields sites currently under consideration. Given the outcome of the market analysis, six different reuse options are under consideration for each of the brownfield sites: parks; green infrastructure to reduce stormwater runoff; urban agriculture – community or small commercial gardens; infill housing; neighborhood retail uses; and mixed use development – retail on ground floors with housing in upper stories.

Meeting participants noted that it would be difficult for small businesses to expand because it would be necessary to address inadequate roads and infrastructure and neighborhood impacts before such expansion could occur.

The catalyst sites, Camden Laboratories and the Phil Mar sites, are the larger redevelopment parcels under consideration. These were discussed extensively during the public meeting in November.

Camden Laboratories site: an advanced conceptual plan for the reuse of this site as an extension of Whitman Park is currently under development by other parties.

Voting preferences: (participants could select up to 3 options)

- Phil Mar: Green Infrastructure (15); Mixed Use (18); Parks (7)
- 1700 Mt. Ephraim Avenue site: Green Infrastructure (5); Infill Housing (15); Neighborhood Retail (21); Mixed Use (21); Parks (5)
- Mulford Street site: Green Infrastructure (9); Infill Housing (10); Urban Agriculture (13); Parks (9)
- 1572 South 10th Street: Green Infrastructure (5); Infill Housing (15); Neighborhood Retail (5); Mixed Use (6); Parking (16)

Neighborhood residents indicated that parking in the vicinity of the 1572 South 10th Street site is extremely limited and expressed an interest in reuse of the site for residential parking. It was noted that the area parking is presently restricted by permit. Impressions about whether permit parking limitations are enforced were mixed.

Open Comment Period

- Non-profit developers should be encouraged to redevelop the brownfields sites. New Life CDC is an area non-profit.
- Whitman park is currently densely developed
- Need to encourage greater community input, connect with the Community Center, expand outreach (it was noted that the City staff personally delivered flyers to neighborhood residents in an effort to spread information about the meeting)
- Will the City post summary reports – BRS will provide reports to the CRA which will post them on their website: Camdenredevelopment.org
- EPA representative attending the meeting indicated that they have a web site that can provide information about known brownfields sites in the neighborhood. Residents were encouraged to visit <https://www.epa.gov/cleanups/cleanups-my-community>
- Participants expressed a desire to promote reuse options that serve younger people in the community