

721 N. MAIN CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN DEVELOPMENT – CITY-WIDE MEETING #2
MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: Wednesday, November 28, 2012

TIME: 6:30 to 8:30 pm

LOCATION: Ann Arbor Community Center, 625 N. Main Street

ATTENDEES: Public present: 39; *refer to Appendix A for sign-in sheet.*

City staff present: 3; Sumedh Bahl; Kayla Coleman; Connie Pulcifer

Consultant Team present (SmithGroupJJR): 2; Neal Billetdeaux; Oliver Kiley

Meeting Notes:

Project team gave a presentation to provide background; available at www.a2gov.org/721NMain. The presentation included a review of: public feedback received from City-wide Meeting #1 and A2 Open City Hall, recommendations from the 721 N. Main Technical Committee were reviewed, and a draft conceptual site plan for 721 N. Main.

Open Discussion Public Comments; Questions and Answers:

Note: this is not a direct transcription of the meeting discussion. This summary has been developed from notes taken during the meeting; comments are paraphrased and direct quotations are altered in brackets when necessary. Where staff/ Consultant Team responses or clarification were provided they are shown in italics.

Q. What would the funds from the potential Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund (MDNRTF) grant be used for? More consulting?

A. *The funds would be used toward construction.*

Q. What is the dollar amount for the grant applications?

A. *MDNRTF is \$300,000 maximum per applicant. Connecting Communities is \$300,000 total that will be distributed among successful applicants; most likely around \$60,000 maximum per applicant. Note that Connecting Communities grants are focused on making connections to the Border to Border Trail. Post meeting clarification: Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission (WCPARC) makes available up to \$600,000 each year toward the cost of eligible projects; reference http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/parks_recreation/greenways/connect-comm/connecting_communities for additional information.*

Q. I am confused about how this site [721 N. Main] could connect to the Border to Border trail (B2B). I live in this area and I am terrified about using Main St. to get to B2B; it is also very lengthy, the current route is about 1 mile from the Water Hill neighborhood to B2B.

A. *Connections from 721 N. Main to B2B will be a phased approach. The 721 N. Main project is just one piece of a future connected trail.*

Q. What does activate the amenity mean?

A. This means attracting users to the site in hopes of preventing it from becoming a nuisance; getting “eyes on the park.”

Q. How much water is likely to be in the [stormwater management] area [of the 721 N. Main site]? Will there be standing water?

A. We are proposing stormwater management for the local watershed area. Roughly estimated there may be water from a minor rain for about an hour, larger rains may have water for 8-12 hrs. Post Meeting clarification: Stormwater management for the site would most likely follow the Rules of the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner for water quality basins to hold water not less than 24 hours nor more than 48 hours.

Q. Of the buildings that are proposed to be remain, do any have flat roofs?

A. Yes, one has a flat roof and one has an arched roof.

Q. Taking into account that this area is a gateway to Ann Arbor are there any plans for incorporating the removal zone that is across the street (the PUD that didn't get traction)?

A. The parcels across from 721 N. Main are still privately owned and currently undergoing a bankruptcy process; until that is settled we cannot count on that piece of property or plan for anything there at this time.

Q. What are the results of environmental assessment? And what are the implications?

A. The Phase I Environmental Site Assessment has indicated that there were mostly petroleum based products used on the site. Next step is a Phase II Assessment, this will involve poking holes (i.e. collecting soil borings) to determine the extent of contamination, and clean up requirements. The use of the site needs to be decided to determine the necessary level of clean up. The scope for the Phase II Assessment is being finalized. Results from the Phase I are available on the [website](#).

Q. Is there anything [related to site contamination] that would be of concern for garden space [at 721 N. Main].

A. We need to wait until the Phase II Assessment is completed to know the answer to that.

Comments:

- I support alternative transportation. I support Project Grow garden, people are there at all times of the day. There is a lot of support for that. Do not build in the floodplain. Having this building right in the floodplain would be bad and I would hate to see residential go in. This site should be an entire park space. I would caution any development. Yes, it is outside of the floodplain but the floodplain map is loosely drawn.
- I always thought that those buildings should come down. But the [North Main Huron River Vision] Task Force (NMVTF) voted to keep them. The right use, such as a grocery store, could fit very well there. It is expensive to bring [the building] back to life but I think it could help to activate the site.

- The removal of that building may slow down the process because environmental issues that come up when you do removal. We may have fewer issues just to keep it if it can be salvaged.
- I have 2 dogs; I have 2 school aged children. We love Belieze Park, Hunt Park, etc. and we use them regularly. I think that a well designed dog park could be great. I live in the neighborhood and I see so many dogs go past my house. [A dog park at] West Park will be an improvement. I think that the garden or dog park could be great. Dog park could help to alleviate some of the problems at the other parks.
 - o Clarification from Parks Commission Representative: The West Park dog park has not yet been decided. But if that is determined it will not preclude having a dog park at 721 N. Main. There is an unmet need for urban dog parks, this has been identified in the PROs Plan.
- I can see a popularity contest; people with dogs want dog parks. What if we find out that the amount of remediation needed could drive up the cost of a garden? What other things are you considering when you are selecting active use? *Staff/ Consultant Team response: we are not making a final decision about active use for the site; however, active uses may be included in the application if it will strengthen the grant application. E.g. the MDNR probably won't fund a dog park. We don't have to make the decision yet about active uses but we didn't want to miss the opportunity to get the community feedback. What is also needed is your input on the site plan that will be used in the grant application.*
 - o NMVTF member clarification- the Task Force is going to recommend some sort of use other than just park because it is a secluded site. We want people at the site continuously. It is an important component but the funding is not yet determined, the grant application is more limited in scope
- Train whistle discussion:
 - o Who wants to see that sound of the train whistle removed?
 - o Real question is do you want the bell of the gate to replace the whistle?
 - o There are no quiet zones in Ann Arbor, however, the more people talk about it will increase the chance that we may get a quiet zone
 - o I like whichever is the loudest, I don't want anyone trying to cross the track.
 - o Based on a hand vote, more people like the sound of the train whistle than not like it.
- When will we have discussions with the community center, what would you like to see in your backyard?
 - o Response from Rev. Yolanda Whiten, Ann Arbor Community Center: I have been kept very informed; I think the ideas so far are great ideas. I think that the interactive flex space is an awesome idea, I think that community gardens is an awesome idea; we have science projects all summer long, it would be great if we could do it in our back yard, save money, save fuel. Everything I have seen here is a great idea, even the walking/biking path, even for the seniors- for the type of exercise that they are capable of doing. It would be an excellent opportunity for what goes on. We go over to Wheeler Park quite frequently. Even a dog park would be beneficial for kids who need to learn how to treat animals.

- We have had two public meetings; there is a lot of interest, how do we stay involved? *Staff response: There are several ways to stay involved, go to the City of Ann Arbor website, the 721 N. Main website, 'Huron River Corridor' project and click the red envelope. The NMVTF meetings are all scheduled from now until July 2013, those are public meetings, you are welcome to attend any of those. Please attend NMVTF meetings to hear the discussion that is on-going. There is a City Council meeting December 17th; the public is welcome to voice their interest there. If City staff gets the go ahead from Council then staff will be pursuing the grant applications.*

Q. What would grant applications be for?

A. The MDNRTF and Connecting Communities would be construction of the proposed site plan (all except the building piece.) *Staff Clarification: The grant applications are due April 2013, it may take 1 yr before the City is allocated any money. It may take some time, it is a lengthy process.*

- Public Comment/clarification: The City has received a FEMA Grant for removal of two buildings from the 721 N. Main site from within the floodway. This grant is an independent matter, funds have already been awarded.

Q. Are you asking council to fund this project? How is this being funded?

A. We are pursuing the Connecting Communities grant in hope of obtaining match funds for the MNDRTF application. If we are not successful in receiving the match funds then we have to seek match funds from another source.

Q. What is the timeframe for project implementation?

A. It may take around one year to get funds and then I think that the money needs to be spent within two years. In November 2013 the City may have a better idea of whether funds will be awarded.

Q. What will be needed in terms of maintenance for the site? What will be the name of the site?

A. These items will need to be determined at a later date. Maintenance for the site will be determined based on the final plans.

Comments:

- A lot of bicyclists would like to have non-motorized connections; they want to stay off roads.
- The existing buildings to be kept could take around 2-5 yrs to rehabilitate.
- But the determination about salvaging buildings has not yet been made and the City has not yet identified a funding source
- Support for porous pavement wherever possible; there are less slip and falls and if there is biking through the site then this could be a good opportunity for that use. The federal government is funding the use of the porous pavement.
- Support for daylighting of Allen Creek, there are a lot of funding opportunities available (I was involved in the daylighting of Gilke Creek in Flint). *Consultant Team response: because [721 N. Main] is the low point for the entire watershed, this would now become the outlet and it would flood nearby properties. There is also a feasibility issue, because the pipe is 10 feet below grade*

the slopes would be so steep it would take up the entire site. Also the Allen Creek water is not safe for human contact.

Comments from Written Feedback Forms:

Note: direct quotations are altered in brackets when necessary; illegible comments were not recorded

What are your thoughts about the proposed site plan?

- Overall I like it, it would be nice to see the parkland designed for both winter and warm weather activities if possible.
- Looks okay.
- Food gatherers would be nice. Relocate gas* fueling facility! (*fumes are not compatible with a nature area). Creative use of an under used area!
- I appreciate the thought that has gone into it. Looks good so far. Prefer future use zone to be used for terraced Project Grow gardens or dog park rather than commercial or residential development. I'm a little concerned that there will be pressure to develop the future use zone and that it could be out of scale (many recent residential projects in WaterHill seem large and out of character – don't want more of that).
- Do not feel building should be saved. Feel community garden suggestion is a good one.
- How can people be attracted to use this space in contrast to Wheeler, N. Main and Bluffs Parks?? Project Grow utilization is a good idea. A high need for a dog park exists now. An interpretive feature at this site and at West Park to show how the creek flows underground and used to look above ground would be useful to educate the public on the floodplain problem and its size.
- Don't develop the floodplain, keep as park to increase economic gain for area, not put people in harm's way.
- I like it! Moving the CNG station is key. I support development of non-flood area to keep eyes on the park.
- Felch entrance has to respect the easement for garage access at 128 Felch. When building was still being used by City workers an OSHA inspection revealed massive unsafe conditions, asbestos, etc. Now it's suddenly feasible to reuse this building?
- Good ideas and responsive to neighborhood input as well as the circumstances of the site. I like the open space, pathways, natural landscaping, stormwater improvement, keeping the building for uses to be explored soon, and allowance for active use in area outside the floodplain.
- I like parts of the proposed site plan (eastern edge, keeping existing building) but I think the "stormwater zone" should think about activating this part of the site too.
- Love ideas for dog park and sustainability and environmental education. Love the trails for bike and pedestrian and connection to future Allen Creek Greenway
- It might be desirable to show trail related to existing/ remaining building and activating use in the future. (Trails may be limited in the floodway, but additional trails or "destination landings" might be implied as future places). With thoughtful design of the floodway elements, the site can be prepared for integration of future site elements outside the floodway. It would be wonderful to

include as many of the activating uses as possible. This integration could better accommodate family activities.

- I am pleased with the general layout, in particular the connections with both Main and Summit Streets.
- Great for this site but bigger issues: (1) connectivity to B to B with sense of arrival, discovery (2) 10-12' wide trails [separated] from sidewalks and streets, safe enough for kids alone to get to their destination (3) grocery in barrel vaulted roof building Great plan 100% support. Thanks!!! Dog Park
- Nice plan. I am concerned though, about access to parking from Summit St – currently Summit is very congested during peak hours . Perhaps, [need] the addition of a turn lane on Summit [to] answer this problem.
- Looks like the natural [gas] pump area is gone and space is incorporated into parking = great idea. Nice trail throughout the park. Active uses below are OK. Does Community Garden attract undesired intrusion (gathering of food?)
- I like it. But, is the parking lot necessary? In the above or the dog park- why not encourage pedestrian and bike access and discourage auto access? Pathways are good and good flow.
- I think the idea of looking at “daylighting” Allen Creek is something that should be taken into consideration. I was involved in securing funding for the “daylighting” of Gilke Creek in the Flint College Cultural Center. The concept of “daylighting” was a key factor in securing funding for the entire project – Trust Fund, EPA, etc!
- I really like this proposed plan; good use of floodway with stormwater treatment potential; also nice connective paths from Wildt through Felch and/or Main. I would use this connection extensively as I bike or walk to work and would like to avoid Main St. which is not alternative transportation friendly. Regarding future use and existing building reuse- I definitely want residential scale 1-2 stories (3 story building at corner of Summit and Hiscock towers over adjacent buildings). I think the existing building could be best used as an extension of the Community Space or as space for artists.
- It’s excellent to see the emphasis on open space. Thank you. Please keep pervious pavement and trail materials as another top priority including for the parking area. Also excellent to include the community Center as an active partner. Look at future connections with the pathways and avoid cutting off future options for flow of movement by bike on foot etc.
- I like it. I like the focus to spend any grant money on planning the open space. It seems feasible with the size of these grants. I like keeping the existing buildings for future reuse, so long as they are secured and nice looking.
- Favor trail component with eye to future B to B connections. Favor stormwater/ water quality components.
- Demonstration and Community gardens that invite residents to learn and build community are a winning combination for the City as a whole. How about a roof garden on the flat roof building.

What types of active uses do you prefer?

- I'd like to see a public vegetable garden space as well as an area for a flower garden. It would be wonderful to have an Ann Arbor rose garden or Michigan wildflower garden. I love the water features and the dog park
- I like all of them.
- A route across RR tracks to the Bike Trail (Border to Border trail) leading to Bandemer Park is CRITICAL for jogging, walking, and biking access.
- Community gardens terraced on hillside. Environmental education/ Interpretive features (available to Community Center groups and others). Dog Park would probably bring a lot of people (I'm not a dog owner, so don't know what local residents who have dogs would prefer). Hoop houses – would like this to be explored too – great ideas. Could have educational component for kids – groups about where food comes from and sustainability. All suggestions so far seem good (environmental and art/ flex space activities).
- Suggestions: a windmill, a parcourse.
- Walking trails connection to other areas, Community garden, Dog Park
- Green space, Project Grow, water amenities with signs, Porous paving
- Dog park- will get the most use, and the most consistent use, and keep the park safe. Community gardens are a great idea, too. And cheap to install. How about garden and dog park? I also support development to activate the park. Interpretive features are good too. Especially if it helps you get a grant.
- Dog park and flex space for community activities are most preferred. Demonstration rain garden is also high priority and could be included along with dog park and flex space. Interpretive features for the storm management and the rain garden would be very helpful as educational, fun aspects. Sustainability options such as pavement in the parking lot that allows rain water absorption by the soil would be wise. Refurbishing the building and making it available as rental space for arts and crafts would be a great asset for the City at large. Dog park would bring people to the space all times of day and night, which is good for public safety. Making the dog park artful would widen support by making the space fun to view. The building being used by artists and crafts folk will also bring people to the site all times of day and night.
- Community garden, improved recreation- water park for kids, sustainability demonstrations- concentrated around the existing building.
- Bike Connections. Connections to future Greenway. Dog park (especially with a more creative design and art emphasis). Sustainable and Environmental Education Opportunities are very exciting and native/ natural landscaping should be emphasized. Great opportunities for education about stormwater (rain gardens) etc. and possibly organic garden or community garden space.
- A more nuanced trail design will recognize adjacencies and context. Try for it! This is the only "improvement" that seems needed to initiate the applications (grants) in a positive community-oriented way.
- As a 13 year resident of "Water Hill" I believe strongly that a dog park would be a highly used amenity. I have 2 school aged children who use Hunt, Belize and Wheeler parks regularly, and while paths and nature areas would be an attraction, I believe additional "playground" areas

would not add to the neighborhood. On the other hand, the nearest areas dogs are legally allowed off leash are not within walking distance, and as a result there are dogs off leash at those parks daily. The dog population in the Water Hill neighborhood is tremendous, and Summit St. has dogs walking along it at all hours of the day.

- To capture increase in taxes if all new development to pay for public amenities. [Pedestrian] bridges over N. Main and RR tracks \$1.5-2 million. [Pedestrian] bridge from N. [Main] over tracks and river to B'way. This connects State St. and campus to river front and helps encourage "loop" opportunity.
- Connection over Main to Border to Border trail. Overpass/ underpass is needed.
- Demonstration garden, garden education, urban farming demonstration, sustainable education
- Dog park- OK- but fence it! Off-leash dog park OK- fence it! Can fund dog park by a dog license fee- p.s. I like dogs and have 2!
- Trails and pathways, community gardening. NO interpretive features.
- I would prefer (1) Community Garden space and (2) Flex use green space. Along with walking trails. I know dog lovers want a dog park but I believe the uses I prefer above would have the widest use by the largest number of people. The community garden could provide opportunities for youth and seniors who come to AA Community Center, to do a intergenerational garden. I would like walking trails exclusive to walker since having biker use with walking creates a less pleasant experience for walkers since most bikers in town do not forewarn walkers that they are approaching.
- Trails- essential. Community Gardening- working great at Hunt Park and not enough space for everyone that would like to garden. I think this would be used and good eye on the "park". Dog park? Seems too small to me but I have a very active dog. Stormwater treatment.
- Playspace for kids, Community Gardens, Dog Park- ok but prefer a small size, if it takes up a large area- not so good.
- Trails, pathways, flex space, Project Grow- with design being very open and having activity all year. We have issues with people congregating in Wheeler Park and participating in illegal activity. We don't want this to occur at 721 N Main. It seems there is room for dog park, Community Garden and flex space. We don't need to choose just one, do we?
- Trails, water quality related, community gardens, dog park (hardly anyone uses a leash at Barton)
- Gardens! Demonstration areas for environmental issues relative to residential living. Community gardens to supplement downtown and near town neighborhood living. Open spaces for wild life-birds, etc. Building- use for community development. Starter businesses and mentoring/ teaching environments.

Other comments related to project process:

- Thank you, Park People!
- Stormwater portion/ paths proposed look good. Thank you. Re: future use zone- I would like to reiterate that I do not think that commercial development or even dense residential development necessarily puts more eyes or activity on the site. Office businesses that are occupied 9-5 M-F will not activate the site. That's why I prefer terraced project grow gardens, environmental interpretive features, community activities/ art space etc. For educational use in conjunction with Community Center activity.
- Utilization of porous pavement for trails throughout the area is essential.
- This was a good continuation to Meeting #1, keep up the good work.
- Not emailed about meeting. Why?
- Keep the good momentum going!
- Good to see the ideas and comments of the neighborhood being taken into account along with assessment by technical experts. Thank you, good to have the website option for communication, too!
- There are a number of City plans, boards and commissions which could identify with the potential of this floodway rehabilitation. Their statements of support could reinforce grant applications. Please introduce this project to them. Environmental Commission, Hazard Mitigation Plan, Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, Park Advisory Commission and PROS Plan, Climate Action Plan, etc.
- I find the community garden at Hunt Park to be beautiful, and wonderful use of the space. However, in all of my use of the park, I do NOT find it be a good way to bring people in throughout the day, year round. The growing season is limited, and even when each gardener comes daily it does not add up to a large amount of traffic. I think the ideas of potential "learning" type gardens, "how to" rain gardens, markers identifying plants within the natural prairie plantings, etc. would be good attractions that do not exist in our other nearby parks. – And all of this may be premature, as it seems the specifics of the "active use" area is years away yet 😊
- For the trails/ bike paths/ loop path – let's use pervious surface treatments like those paving brick that are latticed.
- PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE tear down ALL the existing buildings. Renovation and rehabilitation is too expensive and a waste for a building in a floodplain. Pay for dog park maintenance through dog license fees!
- I was confused about how soon the decision about future use will be made. At one point David on the Task Force said we need to make decision soon, but the meeting facilitator (Connie) said there is time.
- I missed most of the presentation but, if like last time, I thought a good format, good presentation material, good facilitation.
- Continue to keep discussion open and offer opportunity to ask questions. Thank you for the feedback on the priorities that the community prefers open space. Provide a printed version of the website.
- Not the time- 6:30pm is difficult. 7pm-7:30 pm is a better meeting time.
- Schedule meetings slightly later to promote family participation 7-9pm.

APPENDIX A: SIGN-IN SHEET

Name (Please Print):	
1.	DAVE ASKINS
2.	JOE O'NEAL
3.	Kathleen Baxter
4.	ELEANOR POLLACK
5.	DAVID SINE
6.	Bev Cherico
7.	M. Schankler
8.	Kate Harris
9.	PETER ALLEN
10.	Jim + Elen. Fleming

Jonathan Bulky
Cynthia Dunitz
Sandy Weisner
Judith Cowden
Robert Kruse
WAYNE COLQUITT
Sabra Piere
Catherine Riseng
Ray Dettler

Name (Please Print):	
21.	Joe Palms
22.	Deanne Neiburger
23.	Ellen Woodman
24.	Rita Mitchell
25.	BOB ELTON
26.	Vince Casmo
27.	Julie Grand
28.	Joan Harris
29.	Andy + Ovid & Fomertean
30.	KAREN O'NEAL

Name (Please Print):	
41.	Yolanda
42.	ALICE J. RALPH
43.	DARREN MCKINNA
44.	Doug Sandberg
45.	Earl Godwin
46.	Chris Crockett
47.	RAY ANDERSON
48.	Jay & Marie Haite
49.	John Swerdlow
50.	Martha Hill