



## Dania Hall Advisory Group Meeting Notes (June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009)

### Introductions

Everyone introduced themselves and the groups they were representing on the Advisory Group.

### Role of the Advisory Group

City staff spoke about the role of the group, emphasizing its *advisory* nature – no binding decisions are made by the group. The goal of the meeting overall was to discuss how to move forward with City disposition of the Dania Hall site – including but not limited to determining how to best engage the community and come to a consensus.

Agenda and info will be disbursed via link to website  
([http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/dania\\_hall\\_site.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/dania_hall_site.asp))

### Interim Use

A discussion followed regarding the current condition of the site and the possible interim use of the site by the community. Members of the West Bank Community Coalition have been working toward a proposal to use the space in a variety of ways. It is hoped that an interim use could change the perception of the site by showing some kind of ownership and activity, thereby reducing the criminal and nuisance activity that occurs there. A summary of the discussion is below.

**DHAG:** Why can't the neighborhood move forward with an interim use on the site without formal approval from the City? Could the neighborhood use the site spontaneously?

**Staff:** Liability is an issue that needs to be addressed before anyone uses the property. Leasing may cost only \$1.

**DHAG:** There is some community interest in using property 1/week on Saturday for garage sales, one-act plays, flea market, etc. WBCC plans to step up to lead the efforts for getting a proposal together for interim use, and has scheduled a [community meeting](#) on June 24<sup>th</sup>, to discuss possible uses.

**DHAG:** The garden idea did not come to fruition in part because there was no guarantee that the use could stay for 3 years or more term.

**DHAG:** It needs to be stressed that something needs to happen as soon as possible – safety concerns are a major issue – the site is currently being used for criminal activity.

**Staff:** Staff will circulate to the necessary parties a copy of a standard lease for interim uses such as the ones the neighborhood is considering.

**DHAG:** The site is in need of some basic groundcover, and should be held to the standards that private property is held to in the City. A question also arose regarding whether or not the site might be polluted. Wood chips were suggested as a possible ground cover solution.

### Options for marketing the site

Staff talked a bit about the sale process. Marketing sometimes allows for parties to make their best offer based upon an appraisal or the assessor's valuation for the property. There is an appraisal from 2007 for the site that was drafted in response to the adjacent Al-Bina project, but it needs to be updated. The City looks for a viable business plan (tenant or owner-user), that ensures the development will be successful after construction. Staff evaluates the proposed development sources and uses of funding to determine the capacity of the developer; does the developer have an experienced development team? Ultimately, the City enters into some form of redevelopment contract; if the developer fails to perform the City can take the site back. Below is a brief description of the marketing options discussed at the meeting.

**For Sale Sign** – The most passive option for marketing a site. This method consists of a public listing of the property for sale and on site advertizing that the site is for sale.

**Letter of Interest** – Interim step that usually leads to a Request for Proposals. This method allows interested parties to contact the City in an official manner indicating their interest in the site.

**Request for Qualifications (RFQ)** – An RFQ is similar to a Letter of Interest in that it allows parties to indicate their interest in purchasing a site. However, an RFQ usually requires more information about the interested parties' ability to execute a development contract.

**Request for Proposals (RFP)** – The RFP approach is the most detailed of the marketing methods that the City uses to dispose of land. They are sometimes driven by a community engagement process, wherein the community articulates the preferred development scenarios. A summary of the discussion from this point in the meeting can be found below.

**DHAG:** When does the City grant exclusive development rights to a developer?

**Staff:** We sometimes provide those rights to a developer after a RFP process has identified a developer. If Council authorizes staff to negotiate terms of sale with the recommended developer, we sometimes give exclusive rights for a set period of time.

**DHAG:** What market activity has occurred on City property this year?

**Staff:** A handful of sites have had exclusive rights granted, some for condo development, some projects are currently experiencing challenges related to the downturn in the financial markets.

**DHAG:** How much weight is given to community desires in an RFP process?

**Staff:** There isn't a set formula for this but it would certainly be given considerable weight in the case of the Dania Hall site.

**DHAG:** There should be a process before the issuance of an RFP that could get a reading from community.

**DHAG:** The new American community in the neighborhood should lead the project process for Dania and the first step should certainly be less than a RFP. It is hard to get the immigrant community to rally without providing ample time.

**DHAG:** We should hope for a practical proposal with practical results – clear and understandable.

**DHAG:** The development site should transcend nationality – it is about community.

**DHAG:** Redevelopment should honor the spirit of the Dania site.

**DHAG:** How does the group feel about simultaneously issuing a request for letters of interest AND begin drafting the RFP. There was generally positive response from this suggestion.

### **Prioritization of desired site elements**

At this point in the meeting, staff suggested reviewing the list of uses and site elements [suggested by the community at a meeting in January](#). Staff asked attendees to rank or otherwise show preference for uses they felt were more valuable to the community, simply as an additional point of input. The preferences collected from the exercise are summarized [here](#). A discussion followed that is summarized below.

**DHAG:** Why not emphasize the entire list?

**DHAG:** We should emphasize that there are items that may be absent from the list at this time.

**DHAG:** We should give preference to commercial uses on Cedar Avenue that support the commercial district as a whole.

**DHAG:** The development needs to be viable regardless of the use.

**DHAG:** The community should be active in recruiting the tenants that is wants to see locate in the neighborhood.

**DHAG:** The West Bank Business Association is in the process of developing a branding campaign that will enhance the identity of the neighborhood. One of those identifiable features is that Cedar Riverside is proud of its' locally owned businesses and lack of commercial chain stores.

**DHAG:** There is a major need for exercise and youth facilities in the area.

### **Process moving forward**

Staff and neighborhood stakeholders will work together to accomplish additional community engagement. A packet of information will be sent to representatives with the understanding that the reps will distribute this information amongst their groups and gather feedback on the desires of the community related to the Dania site. A Letter of Interest will be drafted for the advisory group review, and released concurrently with the small group portion of the community engagement process. After three months of small group community engagement, stakeholders will report back to City staff who will prepare a large scale neighborhood meeting

to discuss final steps before issuance of a Request for Proposals. Advisory Group members are to inform staff of groups that are absent from the process thus far and need to be engaged. Below are additional details on the conversation of how to move forward.

- A general framework was set up for how to move forward on the property. Need to strike balance between having criteria to guide selection process, and being open to possibility of good new ideas.
  - City staff will draft a request for LOI, circulate to community for comments
  - Release LOI – use responses to help inform development of RFP
  - Work through community process (3 months) to review priorities for site development – small meetings followed by one big meeting; use list of potential uses developed to date to inform the discussion
  - Use results from community input to craft RFP, and solicit proposals
  
- Public input needs careful consideration
  - New Americans can have key role; but will need clear, transparent, and accountable process
  - Outreach needed to variety of faith-based groups
  - Will need to have some materials translated
  - “One big public meeting” concept supported, but needs to be preceded by smaller, targeted meetings (the responsibility of advisory group members to the organizations they represent)
  
- To do items for City staff:
  - Update schedule to reflect new timeline
  - Investigate any responsibilities we have regarding site coverage or maintenance during the holding period
  - Assemble information from past outreach and incorporate into materials for groups to use as starting place for discussion on priorities
  - Work on drafting LOI
  - Look into how we can get translated materials and translators