

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – O’NEIL STREET FACILITY RE-USE PLANNING

PLANNING

Q: Does the City have surveys on population and demographic trends? How is the population changing and who are the people moving here?

A: Please see Appendix A in the City’s Comprehensive Plan [Appendices](#).

Q: Does the City have a recent community survey?

A: Please see this [Survey](#) from 2009 — the most recent time a citizen satisfaction survey for South Portland was conducted.

Q: Are there any burning community needs that this property could be used to fulfill, i.e. land for a school, satellite library, etc.?

A: City Departments have not requested use of this property for an alternate use. The land area is too small for a new school facility.

REDEVELOPMENT

Q: What is the timeframe for redevelopment at the O’Neil Street Facility?

A: Once the O’Neil Street Re-Use Planning Committee has finished its work, and the City Council has given direction on a way forward, the process will transition toward implementation. Demolition of the current structures is not likely to begin before Spring 2018, but there is currently no solid timeline.

Q: What is the estimated cost of cleaning up the site?

A: The City has contracted with Sebago Technics for engineering and project management. They have estimated the cost of demolition and cleanup at around \$250,000.

Q: Will the City remove the fence between Walnut Street properties and current Public Works facility?

A: Unknown at this time. The Committee is aware that residents are interested in maintaining some amount of buffer for privacy, etc.

Q: Will there be an option for abutters to purchase additional land?

A: The City Council has not yet made any decision on the disposition of this City property. The Committee has been asked to recommend a re-use plan for the entire parcel.

Q: Will infrastructure (sewage pipes, water lines) be expanded for capacity of extra homes?

A: Yes, if residential construction occurs then utilities will need to be constructed to serve those buildings. This would be done at the cost of the developer.

Q: Why should the City sell to a developer instead of directly to individuals?

A: A subdivision project is typically managed by a single developer that oversees all demolition, earthwork, utility connections, and roadways constructed to City standards. The developer would then sell or build on the lots created.

Q: How does the City ensure the developer performs as agreed after the land is transferred?

A: The land is likely to be sold with certain performance guarantees and/or deed restrictions that will protect the City's interests as the project is implemented.

Q: Is there a reason why the Committee is not discussing economics along with the design?

A: The initial Design Charrette and Public Forum were meant to allow the Committee members and public an opportunity to express what qualities and characteristics should be included in a redevelopment plan. There will also be a review of economic feasibility to determine what is possible and how certain design elements can be integrated into the final recommended plan.

HOUSING

Q: How many housing units would there be on this 6-acre site under the current A zone?

A: Zoning in the A zone does not currently allow new housing development at the same level of density typically found in the Meetinghouse Hill neighborhood as part of a subdivision. Under current zoning, new subdivisions are limited to four housing units per acre.

Q: What is the as-built density of the neighborhood?

A: The average lot size in the neighborhood is about 6,000 square feet, or seven housing units per acre.

Q: As part of the traditional concept design, what size would the houses be?

A: The size of houses in the neighborhood vary, but generally are between 1,000 sq. ft. to 1,500 sq. ft. The Committee has not discussed a desired range, but Design Standards would likely be included in any zoning amendment made for this parcel.

Q: What is the difference between eco-housing and green housing?

A: Green homes and Eco-friendly homes are one and the same. In general, a green home uses less energy than a conventional home and is built with sustainable building materials.

Q: How big are row houses?

A: Row houses are a style of design where the front and side yards are very small or non-existent, built to the sidewalk, and typically with enclosed back yards. Row houses are an example of intermediate housing density, and provide a more intimate neighborhood feel. Row houses can be all different sizes, with heights from just one-story to five or more stories.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Q: What is affordable housing? How is it defined?

A: *“Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.” – U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development*

Affordable Housing is generally accepted to mean housing that costs 30% or less of a household’s income. Affordable Housing prices vary at different income levels.

Q: How would a community implement affordable housing?

A: There are many strategies to create affordable housing opportunities for households along the income spectrum. South Portland Households earning 120% or more of Area Median Income (AMI) are unlikely to be cost-burdened in the current market. Common strategies to create more housing opportunities for household between 80-120% of AMI include “Inclusionary” land use policies, reducing the cost-basis to build new housing through a variety of land use policies, and supporting housing agencies that seek to create affordable housing for middle income families. Creating housing for families below 80% AMI is more challenging, and typically relies on various financing programs, government subsidies, and tax incentives to “buy down” the cost of creating new housing units that would be unfeasible to build in the market.

Q: Is the City interested in promoting affordable housing?

A: The City Council has created an Affordable Housing Committee to study the issue, has adopted the Committee’s report in 2016, and has expressed support for pursuing many of the policy recommendations made by the Committee.

Q: What is considered an “affordable” price for a single family home for a family earning the area median income?

A: The median income for a family in South Portland is \$67,051 (2015 American Community Survey). After making some assumptions regarding interest rates, property taxes, and insurance, it is estimated that a family earning the median income could afford a house priced at approximately \$250,000 or less.

TRAFFIC

Q: Will traffic congestion be considered?

A: Yes, the Committee recognizes that traffic is an important issue for the neighborhood and will consider traffic calming streetscape design and points of ingress and egress within the neighborhood. The City has also asked Sebago Technics to conduct a traffic study of the O'Neil Street area.

Q: Will a traffic light be considered at Cottage and O'Neil?

A: The potential changes in traffic patterns and counts are not anticipated to warrant a signalized intersection at the intersection of Cottage and O'Neil. A traffic study will be done as part of the planning process.

Q: Could Kent or Olive Streets be extended?

A: Because of the significant change in grade from those streets to the current Public Works facility, it is not feasible to extend those streets.

OPEN SPACE

Q: What is the cost for the city and residents to create a park?

A: The cost of the park would include both the demolition and clean-up of the site as well as the cost to create and maintain the new park. If the City Council would like to consider that alternative, then a cost analysis would likely be done.

Q: Who cares for and maintains the green space or trails?

A: Unknown. This would depend on who owns the land or has a right to use the land. If retained by the City, it may be the City or Land Trust, etc. If owned by the private property owners, it may be the neighborhood residents themselves or if part of a conservation easement the Land Trust or other organization.

COMMUNAL SPACES

Q: Who would manage the proposed co-working space?

A: The City would have to identify an operator to manage the space on behalf of the City.

Q: Would community spaces be open to others outside the neighborhood?

A: If the land is owned privately then certain rules might apply limiting access. However, if owned by the City or another public entity then it is likely the public would have the right to access the community spaces.

Q: If parking were not provided in the immediate area, what would the parking situation be?

A: It is unknown what the parking demand would be without understanding the size and scope of open space, what amenities would exist, etc. If there was demand for parking and no parking was provided, then some on-street parking would likely occur.

Q: Would a playground or food market attract people from other neighborhoods, and what would be the impact in terms of traffic and parking?

A: The demand for those amenities is unknown at this time. One could assume that any amenity would attract some people. Both traffic and parking will need to be considered when contemplating any public amenities as part of the redevelopment.

Q: Who has access to gardens if there is a community garden?

A: This would depend on who owns the land and what rules exist. For example, if the Community Garden Collective were responsible for managing the garden area, then it would probably be managed similarly to the community garden adjacent to Hamlin School.

Q: Why is there orange and pink spray paint on the road?

A: Anytime a project will involve digging in the ground, the *Dig Safe* process must be followed, which involves contacting all utilities that may have infrastructure underground. Each type of utility has its own respective color. The color Pink, specifically, is a "Temporary Survey Marking". In this instance, the City is undertaking a formal survey of the Public Works property.