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Eliot Site Reuse Study Task Force

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1. Introduction

Purpose & Use of Design Guidelines

The purpose of these design guidelines is to provide clearer and proactive guidance for the future reuse and redevelopment of the Eliot School/Community Center site. In February 2010, the St. Louis Park School District decided to close the Eliot Community Center facility and prepared to put the property up for sale. Through discussions between the City and the School District, the City determined that more specific community input was needed for this site to ensure that its future reuse and development would be compatible with the City’s goals, School District’s goals, and the neighborhood’s concerns and desires.

These design guidelines are intended to be a tool for the community, the Planning Commission, and the City Council to assist in planning, designing, and evaluating future development proposals for this site. While good design cannot be explicitly regulated, it should not be left to chance either. Design guidelines are a proactive tool for communicating the community’s vision for reuse of this site in ways that address the community’s goals, neighborhood’s concerns, redevelopment market realities, and sensitivity to the site’s existing context. The design guidelines provide direction while leaving room for individual expression and flexibility that is needed as part of the redevelopment process and for creating a varied and dynamic built environment.

These site reuse guidelines consist of site reuse principles, site design guidelines, and building design guidelines. The site reuse principles embody the community’s general desires and intentions for future uses of this site. The principles provide the big picture view and a means for guiding and evaluating future efforts to reuse this site. The more detailed design guidelines address two levels — site and building. The design guidelines are intended to support, enable and encourage attainment of the site reuse principles.
The site design guidelines address the following site level considerations:

- Land use and development density
- Open space
- Setbacks
- Vehicular access and circulation
- Parking
- Traffic
- Pedestrian circulation
- Stormwater
- Landscaping and buffering
- Regulatory process

The building design guidelines address the following building level considerations:

- Massing and placement
- Height
- Frontage and articulation

The City’s Zoning Code and Subdivision Code regulations as well as Comprehensive Plan land use guidance have legal standing related to future redevelopment on the site. Planned unit development (PUD) applications that are consistent with these design guidelines and approved by the City Council will form the basis for formal agreements with a successful developer in the future. The Zoning Code takes precedence in cases where minimum requirements are not stated in this document but are otherwise defined in the Zoning Code.

Neighbors, prospective developers, and other interested parties should consult these design guidelines and consider them as additional criteria reviewed and commented on by neighborhood and City representatives in the course of an open, iterative public process. The design guidelines are not, however, legally mandated requirements that must be met in order to obtain project approvals. They depict preferred conditions and represent the best case conditions for redevelopment. As such they are the foundation of dialogue with development interests and will influence future development on this property.

**Planning Process**

The Eliot School/Community Center Site Reuse Study was initiated in May 2010 as a collaborative planning effort between the City and the School District. City and School District staff worked together on the project. The City also contracted with a consultant team, Hoisington Koegler Group Inc. (HKG), to lead the site reuse study and facilitate a community and stakeholder input process that would guide the study's recommendations. The site reuse study included site analysis, a community involvement process, exploration of site reuse concepts, and the creation of site reuse design guidelines. The reuse study occurred from May to October 2010.

The community involvement process involved establishing a site reuse study task force, conducting task force meetings, and facilitating two (2) community meetings. The site reuse study task force was established with 20 members, including 15 residents, the Ward 4 City Council member, a Planning Commissioner, a Parks & Recreation Commissioner, and two School District representatives. All residents that expressed their
interest in participating on the task force were invited to become task force members. The task force met three times from June to August 2010:

- **June 30, 2010**
- **July 22, 2010**
- **August 26, 2010**

Working with the task force, the reuse study planning process consisted of the following steps:

1. Analyze existing site, including the property, building and neighborhood context
2. Conduct Neighborhood Meeting #1
3. Establish task force and identify site reuse goals - Task Force Meeting #1
4. Develop alternative reuse concepts to help identify site reuse principles - Task Force Meeting #2
5. Develop draft set of site and building design guidelines — Task Force Meeting #3
6. Conduct Neighborhood Meeting #2
7. Review and adopt Eliot School/Community Center Site Design Guidelines

Two neighborhood meetings were held during the planning process — one at the beginning and one at the end of the process. The first meeting was held on May 18, 2010 at the Eliot Community Center with approximately 32 attendees. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an overview of the project, gather residents’ ideas, concerns, and preferences regarding the future reuse of the site, and solicit participants for the site reuse study task force. The second neighborhood meeting was held on October 14, 2010. The purpose of this meeting was to present the draft site design guidelines to the neighborhood and gain feedback prior to finalizing the guidelines for adoption by the City Council and School Board.

### Community Input

The planning process provided opportunities for community input via the three task force meetings and two neighborhood meetings during summer/fall 2010. Two primary urban design exercises were used to invite discussion and input from the project’s task force: 1) a self-guided tour of six (6) recent housing redevelopment sites in St. Louis Park; 2) creation of six (6) alternative illustrative concepts for redeveloping the Eliot Community Center site. The two neighborhood meetings used both group presentation and open house materials to solicit input from the general public.

The appendix contains meeting notes/summaries from the neighborhood meetings and task force meetings as well as the six alternative illustrative concepts created for task force discussion/input purposes.

### City’s Existing Policy Framework

The City’s existing policy framework includes Vision St. Louis Park, Livable Community Principles, land use goals, housing goals, and economic development/redevelopment goals, all part of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, which was updated and adopted in 2009. Each of the land use, housing, and economic development/redevelopment goals is supported by a set of strategies, which are not listed below.

### Vision St. Louis Park

The City Council adopted four major strategic directions to focus as the community’s vision:

- **St. Louis Park is committed to being a connected and engaged community.**

Eliot Community Center Site Reuse Study Design Guidelines
St. Louis Park is committed to providing a well-maintained and diverse housing stock.

St. Louis Park is committed to promoting and integrating arts, culture, and community aesthetics in all City initiatives, including implementation where appropriate.

St. Louis Park's Livable Community Principles

1. Walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods
2. Life-cycle housing choices
3. Higher density, mixed-use development
4. Human scale development
5. Transit-oriented development
6. Multi-modal streets and pathways
7. Preserved and enhanced natural environment
8. Attractive and convenient public gathering places
9. Public art, heritage and culture
10. Unique community and neighborhood identity

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Goals (most relevant)

- Promote building and site design that is oriented toward creating an integrated, human scale, multi-modal transportation environment
- Create a mix of residential land uses and housing types to increase neighborhood housing choices and the viability of greater neighborhood services through redevelopment or infill development
- Preserve and enhance the livability and unique character of each neighborhood’s residential areas

Comprehensive Plan Housing Goals (most relevant)

- Explore traditional and non-traditional owner-occupied housing options
- Expand the mix of housing types
- Promote higher density housing near transit corridors
- Encourage more large homes for families
- Promote and facilitate more housing options for seniors

Comprehensive Plan Economic Development & Redevelopment Goals (most relevant)

- Encourage redevelopment projects that fulfill the City’s Vision and meet other community goals
- Also, the City has established 17 Redevelopment Assistance Objectives for redevelopment projects

Land Use Plan

The City’s land use plan map currently guides this property for Civic land uses.

Zoning Code

The City’s current zoning map designates this property as R-2 (Single Family Residence District).
Site’s Location within the Community

The Eliot School/Community Center site is located on the north side of Cedar Lake Road, between Hampshire and Idaho Aves, in the Eliot neighborhood. The Eliot View neighborhood is located on the south side of Cedar Lake Road. The site is located approximately ¼ mile east of the Louisiana Ave/Cedar Lake Road intersection and approximately ½ mile south of I-394.

Existing Site Conditions

The site is approximately 4.3 acres and developed with a 74,000 sq. ft. school building that is two and three stories in height. The rest of the site consists of surface parking areas and open space, including kids’ play area, basketball court, and open field. The triangle open space area in front of the school and along Cedar Lake Road contains a passive green space with mature trees and loop driveway for bus drop off purposes. Existing vehicular access to the site is via the loop driveway (Cedar Lake Road and Hampshire Ave) and three accesses on Idaho Avenue oriented to the surface parking areas.

The original portion of the school building was built in 1926, with the majority of it (85%) built in 1952. The building has not been used by the School District as a traditional public school since 1971. Most recently, nearly all of the building was by five private educational/academic users.
Neighborhood Context

**Surrounding land uses**
Directly surrounding the site is primarily single family detached residences with a church located across Cedar Lake Road. Medium density residential, neighborhood commercial, park/open space, and the Edgewood Industrial Park are also located near the site.

**Transportation access**
The site is located on Cedar Lake Road which is a minor arterial street under the City’s jurisdiction. Hampshire Ave and Idaho Ave are local streets.

Cedar Lake Road has two bus routes running on it and Louisiana Avenue has three bus routes.

Sidewalks exist along Cedar Lake Road, Hampshire Ave, and Idaho Ave. Cedar Lake Road has designated bike lanes. The Franklin Ave trail is located just to the north of the site, which connects from Hampshire Ave west to Louisiana Ave Access to the North Cedar Lake Regional Trail is approx. 1/2 mile away at Louisiana Ave. To the east, a future bikeway is planned for Edgewood Ave with a new bike/walk bridge connection to the North Cedar Lake Regional Trail.

**Neighborhood parks**
Three existing parks are located within ¼ mile of the site — Jersey Park, Hampshire Park/Otten Pond, and Northside Rotary Park.

**Neighborhood retail & services**
The site is located within convenient walking distance (¼ mile) from the neighborhood commercial node at Cedar Lake Road & Louisiana Ave and approximately one mile from the regional commercial center at Cedar Lake Road & Park Place Boulevard (which includes the new West End retail and entertainment area).
3. Site Reuse Principles

The Site Reuse Principles embody the community’s general desires and intentions for appropriate future reuses of the Eliot Community Center site. These ten principles provide the community’s big picture view and a means for guiding and evaluating future proposals for reusing this site. These general principles are supported by the detailed design guidelines in Section 4.

1. Mix of Medium Density Residential Land Uses

Future land uses should be a mix of at least two medium density residential uses that contribute to the community’s long-term goal of being a livable community with a variety of lifecycle housing options and leverage the site’s location and proximity to transit, parks, trails, bike routes, and commercial areas.

2. Transition Building Heights Across the Site from South to North

Concentrate taller and higher density buildings on southern half of site toward Cedar Lake Road and locate lower buildings on the northern half of the site.

3. Complement Existing Development Scale and Character

Building form, scale, placement and massing should be sensitive to the scale and character of the surrounding homes.

4. Neighborhood Open Space

Reuse of the site should incorporate open space that is located along a public street, visible to the public, and ideally allows public access.

5. Community Landmark and Neighborhood Gateway

Reflect the site’s role as a long-time community landmark and Eliot neighborhood gateway on Cedar Lake Road by preserving the mature trees and enhancing the triangular open space area fronting on Cedar Lake Road.

6. Neighborhood Connectivity

Support neighborhood connectivity by incorporating an east-west pedestrian connection through the site.
7. Redevelopment Feasibility

Reuses of the site should achieve a reasonable financial return for the School District balanced with the appropriate fit with the City’s goals and these reuse principles.

8. Owner-Occupied Housing

Owner occupied housing is preferred, however, assisted living services could be an accessory use to an owner-occupied senior housing development.

9. School Building Reuse

There is neither strong community preference nor opposition to reusing the existing school building; however, future developers are encouraged to evaluate the condition of the building to determine the possibilities of reuse for residential units.

10. Interim Property Maintenance

It is important for the property owner to keep the site and building properly maintained and in safe condition prior to and during redevelopment construction.
4. Site Design Guidelines

The Site Design Guidelines address the following site level considerations:

- Land use and development density
- Open space
- Setbacks
- Vehicular access and circulation
- Parking
- Traffic
- Pedestrian circulation
- Stormwater
- Landscaping and buffering
- Regulatory process

A. Land use and development density

Reuse of the site should be guided for Medium Density Residential development allowing a net residential density from six (6) to 30 dwelling units per acre or between 26 and 129 dwelling units on the Eliot School property.

Residential development should include a minimum of two types of residential land uses that expand the variety of lifecycle housing options in the neighborhood. Potential housing types are single family detached, attached townhome, and multi-family buildings.

Redevelopment of the site is envisioned as a single complementary development consisting of two housing areas. The southern area is to be higher density than the northern area of the site reflecting its location on Cedar Lake Road, which is an arterial and transit street, and the scale and massing of the existing Eliot Community Center building. The northern area is envisioned as lower density than the southern area reflecting the local street frontages and surrounding single family residences.

Taller buildings should be located in the southern area and transition down to lower buildings in the northern area.

Civic or institutional buildings, such as a community center, place of worship, senior activity center, or educational facility, would also be appropriate in the southern area of the site.

Use of the small remnant piece of the Eliot School property located east of Hampshire Avenue should be determined in conjunction with redevelopment of the overall site. The remnant land currently contains a small parking lot. Potential uses include, but are not limited to, guest parking for the future redevelopment, parking for the church located south of Cedar Lake Road, or sale to the adjoining residential property owner to the east.
B. Open space

The triangular green space along Cedar Lake Road should be preserved and enhanced to reflect the site’s history as a community landmark and gateway to the Eliot neighborhood. Regardless of whether or not the existing school building is reused, this green space should continue to be a landmark that remains generally as open space. This open space should not be used for parking.

It is encouraged that some open space on the site be oriented to the street, rather than enclosed between the buildings, to enhance the visual character of the site’s redevelopment from adjacent homes and the street. The development will need to meet the City’s zoning code requirements for Designed Outdoor Recreation Area as well.

Although public open space is not planned for this site, recreational open space is encouraged on the site since this school site has historically had open space that was accessible to the neighborhood. Open space on the site should be privately owned and operated. Public access to the open space, as appropriate, is encouraged.

C. Setbacks

Building(s) fronting onto Cedar Lake Road should have a setback from Cedar Lake Road similar to that of the existing school building and achieving requirements of the City’s zoning code.

Building(s) should generally complement the setbacks of existing houses from Hampshire Ave., Idaho Ave., and the northern property line.

D. Vehicle access and circulation

Current conditions: Today the site has one access point on Cedar Lake Road, one on Hampshire Ave, and three on Idaho Ave. Cedar Lake Road is a designated A Minor Arterial (major roadway) and Hampshire Ave. and Idaho Ave. are local streets. All three streets are under the City’s jurisdiction. Vehicle access points to the site should be located on Hampshire Ave. and/or Idaho Ave. rather than Cedar Lake Road. Driveways for individual housing units should generally be located internally, accessed by shared driveways, to reduce the impact of and visibility from adjacent homes and the street, with the exception of single-family detached houses.

Vehicle circulation within the site should not create a direct connection that has the potential for attracting cut-through traffic.

E. Parking

Adequate parking should be provided on the site for residents and guests to minimize the need for on-street parking. The provision of parking spaces will meet the requirements for residential land uses as defined by the City’s zoning code and/or independently commissioned studies.

Parking for residents should be provided in garages or below the building(s).

Guest parking could be provided in the form of on-site surface parking areas. Surface parking spaces for building(s) fronting onto Cedar Lake Road should be located on the north side of the building(s) so that they are generally not visible from Cedar Lake Road. On-site surface parking areas should be located convenient to building entrances to encourage on-site parking over on-street parking.
All off-street surface parking areas should be located internally on the site and visually buffered from public streets.

Landscaping in surface parking lots must meet the requirements of the City’s zoning code.

**F. Traffic**

New traffic generated as a result of site redevelopment will be limited by development density restrictions. Additional traffic analysis may be required, contingent upon land use and density.

**G. Pedestrian circulation**

Sidewalks should be retained and enhanced on all three streets in conjunction with redevelopment.

A publicly accessible, landscaped mid-block pedestrian connection should be provided to enable an east-west connection between Hampshire Ave. and Idaho Ave. Design of this pathway is encouraged to be a meandering route rather than simply a straight east-west route to create an aesthetically pleasing amenity that integrates well with the new development and the neighborhood. The width of this pedestrian connection and mid-block open space could be designed to provide a visual break and transition space between the northern and southern buildable areas if appropriate. Ideally, a mid-block connection would accommodate walking and biking.

**H. Stormwater**

Site related stormwater runoff should be managed to meet the City’s and watershed on-site water storage and water quality requirements using best management practices (BMPs) as identified in the City’s subdivision code, such as rain gardens, detention/treatment basins, pervious pavements, and green roofs.

**I. Landscaping and buffering**

Landscape and/or architectural buffering should be incorporated into redevelopment for adjacent properties to the north.

Appropriate landscaping, including street trees, should be provided along Hampshire Ave. and Idaho Ave.

Existing mature trees should be preserved where feasible.

**J. Regulatory process**

The rezoning and development approach should be commensurate with the Medium Density Residential (6 – 30 housing units per acre) land use designation.

Replatting of land at time of development should include dedication of the southeast corner of property as public right-of-way for Hampshire Ave.

Park dedication should be received as cash in lieu of land since public park land is not planned in this area of the City.
5. Building Design Guidelines

The building design guidelines address the following building level considerations:

» Massing and placement
» Height
» Frontage and articulation

A. Massing and placement

The greatest building mass should be located in the southern area of the site in the general vicinity of the existing school building. The goal is to allow a greater building mass nearer to Cedar Lake Road since the existing building is a larger building mass and Cedar Lake Road is an arterial street with higher traffic levels and transit services.

Placement of buildings should relate to the north-south streets (Hampshire and Idaho Aves.) rather than the diagonal alignment of Cedar Lake Road. Building(s) in the southern area of the site should not be located parallel to Cedar Lake Road.

B. Height

Building heights in the southern area of the site should be a minimum of two stories and up to five stories. The Eliot School Site Reuse Task Force’s preference is for lower building heights, if possible.

Depending upon the actual placement and size of the building(s) in the southern area of the site, stepbacks for upper floors (above three stories) may be desirable. For example, if a portion of the building is located further north than the existing school building, stepbacks of the 4th and 5th floors are recommended.

Building heights in the northern area of the site should be one to three stories.

A variety of heights for both the taller and lower buildings is preferable to soften the overall scale of the new development and prevent a cookie-cutter look. Taller building(s) should be oriented toward Cedar Lake Road. For the taller building(s), it is preferable to have multiple heights rather than a uniform height. The existing school building is a mix of two and three stories. This approach also enables building heights to be concentrated at the appropriate locations while maintaining lower heights at the edges closest to the existing single-family residences.

C. Frontage and articulation

Building façade “fronts” should face existing public streets, where possible.

Building(s) in the southern area of the site should have a frontage toward Cedar Lake Road, including a clearly visible pedestrian entrance to the building, since this site has historically had a landmark building and open space fronting onto Cedar Lake Road.
Building utility areas, e.g. electrical and trash should not be located with direct visibility from any public street.

Building frontages facing public streets should include entries and direct sidewalk connections to the existing public sidewalks.

Building frontages facing public streets should have facade articulation that reflects the presence of individual housing units within the building, reduces building mass and scale, and enlivens the street environment.
Six site reuse illustrations were created and presented to the Task Force on 07/22/2010. These illustrative concepts were used to get the task force’s input on issues and opportunities related to redevelopment of the site.
Appendix: Community Input

The appendix includes meeting notes and input summaries from the three task force meetings and two neighborhood meetings:

- May 18, 2010 Neighborhood Meeting Input
- June 30, 2010 Task Force Meeting Notes
- July 22, 2010 Task Force Meeting Notes
- August 26, 2010 Task Force Meeting Notes
- October 14, 2010 Neighborhood Meeting Input

The appendix also includes the six alternative illustrative concepts created for task force discussion/input purposes only on the page 16 (opposite page).

A. May 18, 2010 Neighborhood Meeting Input

Input from the approximately 32 attendees at the May 18, 2010 Community Meeting was solicited through a small group discussion exercise, which was focused on three questions. The following input was received from the four small groups assembled at the meeting.

1. In what ways could reuse/redevelopment of this site create a great place that enhances the neighborhoods (Eliot & Eliot View) and also improves the livability of the community in general?

Group 1:
- Community park
- No high density housing
- Playground
- Single-family homes
- Park
- Senior housing

Group 2:
- Desire private homes.
- If the site went high or medium density, it should be senior housing. No taller than three stories. However, high/medium density should be the “last resort” option.
- If redevelopment is larger residential lots and homes, it is important that new homes fit in architecturally.
- Owner-occupied housing.
Group 3:

» Move-up housing
» Similar size lots with slightly bigger houses
» Senior care housing, assisted living, not just 55+ housing though
» Single-family residential
» Park
» School

Group 4:

» Preserve building facades of existing building (all sides), no matter what the reuses are inside the building.
» Is there any potential for historic designation of this building?
» On the other hand, historic designation would present some hurdles for redevelopment.
» Do not want tall buildings.
» Do not want high density uses.
» It would be good to preserve some open space on the site, but not necessarily as much as exists today on the north side of the building.
» As an example, new multi-family residential building (Aquila Commons) between Texas Ave and Aquila Park is too dense.
» Should explore the potential for cluster housing on the site.
» Single-family housing may fit the best due to the existing single-family housing surrounding the site.
» Potential for senior center at Eliot School building, which is currently located at Lenox Community Center.

2. What potential issues should be considered with reuse/redevelopment of this site?

Group 1:

» Building heights
» Density
» Traffic
» Public safety

Group 2:

» Neighborhood wants to know ahead of time the implications of development construction, including what the property owners’ rights are, in writing.
» Concern about traffic increases.
» Should vary building edge if high density residential (twinhomes, townhomes with varying heights and setbacks).
» No low income housing.
» Too much existing senior housing is not filled today.
Group 3:

- Prefer no multi-family residential (apartments, condominiums, townhomes, duplexes).
- Concern about variances redefining original guidelines.
- Concern about increased traffic on streets.
- Should limit the number of building stories to three or less.
- Should set buildings back from Cedar Lake Road, more central location on the site.

Group 4:

- Potential environmental issues with renovating the existing building.
- Loss of neighborhood landmark, icon.
- Possibility for a mix of uses — civic and residential?
- Loss of more civic uses on the northside — north of BNSF rail corridor.

3. What other information, comments, concerns, ideas or thoughts do you have relating to potential reuse goals for this site?

Group 1:

- No public housing.
- Nothing to detract from property values.
- Consider how redevelopment could impact traffic patterns in the area.
- Minimize redevelopment (construction) impacts on the neighborhood.

Group 2:

- Park used for basketball, playing catch (baseball), dog walking or dog running, golf, swinging — not organized sports.
- Where will the neighborhood vote? Lack of a local civic space.

Group 3:

- Concerned about care of the property after the building is closed down and before it sells.
- Has anyone approached the school board to purchase the property?
- Concerned about increased crime if redevelopment of the site is rental housing.
- Desire for green space, landscaping, trees, particularly if there will be more single-family homes added to the neighborhood.
- Do not want commercial redevelopment.

Group 4:

- Preferred reuse of site:
  - #1 – If possible, civic or institutional
  - #2 – Residential
- Do not think commercial or industrial would be a good fit.
Individual comment cards:

» “I don’t want a lot of houses or senior housing going in & then we all get assessed for roads, sidewalks, sewers, etc.

B. June 30, 2010 Task Force Meeting
   Notes

Attendees:

Task Force Members: Larry Shapiro, Sandy Salin, Carl Robertson, Christina Barberot, Kim Justeson, Judy Hammer, Elaine Mense, Sherie Lockhart, Joyce Keshol, Doug Mosier, Carol Stewart, Chuck Sewall, Kelly Ruby

City Planning Staff: Meg McMonigal, Marney Olson

Project Planning Consultants: Greg Ingraham and Jeff Miller (HKGi)

Absent: Julia Ross, Todd Evangelist, Mark & Barb Saba, Laura Nolan, Linda Mosier, Matt Ruby

Task Force Process

The kick-off project task force meeting began with introductions of the task force members, city planning staff, and the project planning consultants. The task force is made up of members representing the school district, city (Planning Commission and Parks Commission), and neighborhoods (Eliot and Eliot View). City staff and consultants explained the project, role of the task force, and meeting schedule. Three task force meetings are anticipated in June, July and August/September:

   June meeting — Project info, background, and preliminary input from task force
   July meeting — Review & discussion of alternative site reuse concepts and principles
   August/September meeting — Review & discussion of site design guidelines

Eliot Site Reuse Background

The planning consultants presented information about the site’s features, background, and context. They also presented the City’s plan (Comprehensive Plan) and its bearing on the future reuse of the Eliot Community Center site, including the City’s ten Livable Community Principles, land use goals, housing goals, and economic development/redevelopment goals. Finally, a summary of the input received at the May 18th Neighborhood Meeting was presented.

Preliminary Site Reuse Principles, Design Parameters & Potential Site Reuse Concepts

Seven (7) preliminary site reuse principles were presented by the planning consultants relating to the following:

» Future Land Uses,
» Variety of Housing Options,
» Site’s Access & Amenities,
» Community & Neighborhood Landmark,
The rest of the meeting was focused on the task force's discussion of these preliminary principles and potential site reuse concepts to be explored.

The potential for senior housing to be developed on the site was discussed first. Some questions about the need for any additional senior housing in St. Louis Park. Discussion followed about existing senior housing development in SLP and where they are located within the community, e.g. only one of the eight developments is located north of Minnetonka Boulevard. Discussion took place about the need to think about senior housing as more than just one type of housing, not just apartments, to meet the variety of housing preferences that seniors may want in the future.

Discussion about the potential for removing the existing school building, subdividing the site into single-family residential lots, and selling the lots off individually. This alternative would prevent the site from being redeveloped with cookie-cutter houses all constructed by the same builder. The big question is whether this redevelopment scenario is economically feasible.

Another redevelopment alternative discussed was removal of the existing school building, construction of one or two rows of townhouses along Cedar Lake Road (where school building is located today), and larger lot single-family houses on the northern portion of the site.

The concept of redeveloping the site entirely with rowhouses was proposed with 40 ft wide lots which could have the potential for 30+ housing units.

The SLP School District has a market value appraisal for the site. The market value appraisal helps determine what type of redevelopment is feasible in today's market. The School District is willing to work to balance its revenue needs from selling the site with the neighborhoods' concerns and the reality of the real estate market.

Discussion about the negative impacts of the existing building sitting empty and the need for timely reuse of the site to prevent a prolonged vacant building situation.

Suggestion that design guidelines for Eliot site should allow some flexibility for lot sizes, setbacks, etc.

Staff/consultants offered to put together a self-guided redevelopment tour map for task force members. The intent is for task force members to look at recent redevelopment projects in SLP as a way to help them understand and describe what types of parameters are needed for redevelopment on the Eliot School site. The task force's homework assignment is to visit these recent redevelopment sites prior to the next task force meeting in July.
C. July 22, 2010 Task Force Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Task Force Members: Larry Shapiro, Sandy Salin, Carl Robertson, Christina Barberot, Kim Justesen, Judy Hammer, Elaine Mense, Sherie Lockhart, Joyce Keshiol, Carol Stewart, Chuck Sewall, Kelly Ruby, Mark & Barb Saba

City Planning Staff: Meg McMonigal, Marney Olson

Project Planning Consultants: Greg Ingraham and Jeff Miller (HKGi)

Absent: Julia Ross, Todd Evangelist, Laura Nolan, Linda & Doug Mosier, Matt Ruby

Perspectives on Self-Guided Redevelopment Tour

Task force members were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the six (6) relatively new housing redevelopment projects suggested for a self-guided redevelopment tour. Task force members’ comments included the following:

Brookside Lofts (former Brookside Elementary School at Vernon Ave & 41st St)

» The former Brookside school building is substantially larger than the Eliot school building — 111,000 sq ft vs. 74,000 sq ft.

» New single-family homes do not fit in well with surrounding older homes — new homes are much bigger in size and have attached garages.

» Keeping the curved driveway in front of the building is a nice feature of the site.

» It was difficult to figure out where the building’s parking areas are located.

Village in the Park (West of Wooddale Ave & 36th St intersection)

» The townhouses have too many steps as they are 3-floor units.

» The site is too dense.

» Character of the development is multiple taller buildings.

Pointe West (Zarthan Ave & 16th St)

» Townhouses do not have yards. Lack of green space although there is a new city park located directly west of the development.

» Character of the development is multiple taller buildings.

» Street is much lower than the fronts of the townhouses and fronted by a substantial retaining wall, which makes the buildings seem taller.

Aquila Commons (Texas Ave & 33rd St)

» Lack of substantial green space on site although there is a large city park located next to the building.

» Senior building that is a residential cooperative.
Looks like a glorified apartment building but looks nice — good apartment building design.

Feels like a huge building even though it is a mix of three and four stories to soften its impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

Generally like the small landscaped open space areas including the meandering “dog walk”, garden and wood gazebo — well designed for a tight site.

West Oak Condos

Felt that this development doesn't seem relevant to the Eliot school site because there is not any lower density residential adjacent to this site. The only nearby housing is large apartment/condo buildings, otherwise surrounded by commercial uses.

Ellipse on Excelsior

Felt that it is too early to evaluate this development since it is still under construction.

Some task force members also suggested that the Amhurst townhouses in the SW corner of the city is well designed and provides a good example for redevelopment of the Eliot School site.

**Discussion of Alternative Site Reuse Concepts**

The planning consultants presented six (6) alternative concepts for redeveloping the site as a means to identify and define site reuse principles and design guidelines. The six (6) concepts consisted of the following:

A. Large family-size houses

B. Townhouse mix

C. Eliot senior housing mix (Eliot School building is kept)

D. Eliot mixed density housing (Eliot School building is kept)

E. New mixed density housing

F. Eliot mixed density housing (Eliot School building is kept)

The concepts cover a broad range of housing types including multi-story condo/apartment buildings, townhouses, and larger single-family detached houses. The townhouses shown in the concepts included one-story (senior housing), two-story, and three-story.

Some members felt that concept F was too big in scale and that the neighborhood does not need more multi-family buildings. This concept also is not consistent with the site reuse principles being established.

Concept E was seen as fitting with the site reuse principles.

Support for concept D, particularly the small green space/play area that would be kept on Hampshire Avenue.

Support for concept B’s mid-block walking connection between Hampshire and Idaho Avenues.
Discussion that concept A fits the site reuse principles except that it is most likely not economically feasible for a developer to take on. The land and redevelopment costs could cause the prices of new single-family houses to be upwards of $500,000. Also, unlike the other concepts, this concept does not show a mix of housing types.

It was suggested that concept A and concept B could be combined so that there are townhouses on the southern portion of the site and single-family houses on the northern portion of the site.

There was preliminary consensus that concepts C, D, and E represent the best fit with the site reuse principles and a good financial return for the school district.

It is important to encourage redevelopment of owner-occupied housing.

Task force requested that the analysis of the site’s redevelopment costs/feasibility for housing be explored with developers.

Redevelopment should preserve the mature trees on the site.

Leave open the option for the site/building to be reused as a community center or other community use if possible.

Redevelopment design guidelines should consider design aspects of the Amhurst townhouse community.

It is important that the triangle open space along Cedar Lake Road and mature trees be kept and enhanced as part of the site’s redevelopment.

There was preliminary consensus that keeping the Eliot School as part of the site’s reuse does not need to be a priority.

Question about whether the property would be rezoned and reguided on the City’s land use plan (from Civic to a residential land use) prior to a developer proposing a redevelopment project.
Individual Task Force Member Evaluations of Site Reuse Concepts & Principles

Table below shows number of responses — strong, moderate or weak fit — with ten (10) members filling out the Site Reuse Evaluation form at the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Reuse Principle</th>
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Concept A Comments

Likes:

» Owner-occupied (2)
» Nothing
» Less traffic
» Least offensive of all
» Retains single-family character of neighborhood
» It’s what SLP needs, we need larger homes to keep growing families
» Sidewalks
» Potential for trees/landscaping

Dislikes:

» Would not fit but would look like it is trying to
» Too large of homes, three-car garages again not fitting
» Rowhouses may look too much alike
» Probably can’t generate enough revenue for School Board
» Huge size in the middle of small neighbors
» Prefer garages toward backside, like current houses in the neighborhood
» Potential loss of mature trees

Other comments or suggestions:

» Houses this large would not fit with existing homes — what is the draw to have a house this large here?
» Smaller lot size
» Alternate roadside designs to avoid cookie-cutter effect
» Keep as much green space/open areas
» Houses would be too big for existing homes
» Don’t forget to look into the townhouses on Gettysburg and Independence

Concept B Comments

Likes:

» Maximizes site but works with scale of neighborhood
» Parking not visible
» Amount of green space
» Retains green triangle
» May work, how about a mix of single-family houses and townhouses
Invisibility of residences’ parking is very nice

Good concept

Look at garages/entrances to find good fit

Walking path connection from Idaho/Hampshire

Parking is more hidden from neighbors

Green space on Cedar Lake Road

Dislikes:

Self-contained, separate from neighborhood

Open space not visible/accessible to current neighbors

Other comments or suggestions:

Perhaps mix different sizes of townhouses

Place townhouses off Cedar Lake Road and single-family houses behind

Less traffic than apartments

Keep green space/open areas

Additional parking space is a question

Where is additional parking? May cause congestion on the streets, whereas, there are usually very few cars on street now

**Concept C Comments**

Likes:

Keeps building

Good scale

One-level housing

Like the triangle open space

If restricted to two-story maximum, it may work

Keeping mature trees on Cedar Lake Road

Keep mature trees

One-story townhouses

Like that if existing building stays that additional homes are not multi-story

Green space on Cedar Lake Road

Dislikes:

Reuse of building??

The existing school building is ugly and not worthy of redevelopment

Still keeps Eliot building
» School building needs to go to maximize available space to redevelop
» Parking is an eyesore
» Lack of green space, use of green space is limited to residents only

Other comments or suggestions:
» Mix in some single-family/townhouses
» What to do with school building? If removed, 3–4 story building in front does not complement neighborhood
» Needs some green area
» Make sure they are owned and operated by single family residents, no rental property

**Concept D Comments**

**Likes:**
» Some open space on Hampshire
» Keeps building
» Good scale
» Like the park
» Keep mature trees on Cedar Lake Road
» There is a playground
» Small park
» Trees
» Small playground could include neighbors
» Potential for open space accessible to other residents/neighbors (or street side)

**Dislikes:**
» Reuse of building??
» Keeping the existing building, get rid of the building
» Parking is visible
» Building needs to go
» Too dense?
» Too much parking, put the parking under the building
» Lack of green space

Other comments or suggestions:
» One-story and two-story mix
» Green space in front on Cedar Lake Road
Concept E Comments

Likes:

» Good mix
» Maximizes site
» Good scale
» Like nothing about this
» Like the different heights for neighborhood
» Like the non-through street
» Parking is hidden
» Grouping of houses to allow spacing
» Sidewalk/path between Idaho/Hampshire

Dislikes:

» Too dense (2)
» Seems exclusive, not connected to neighborhood
» Potential loss of mature trees
» Lack of green space

Other comments or suggestions:

» Feels like it could be a true part of neighborhood
» Townhouses that aren’t so big, smaller in size

Concept F Comments

Likes:

» Nothing
» Like nothing about this
» Not much to like in this one
» Keeping mature trees on Cedar Lake Road
» Nothing
» Keep trees and green space

Dislikes:

» Not owner-occupied
» Two large buildings, too big, doesn’t fit
» Too massive
» All of it too institutional, would not fit within the neighborhood as it is
Totally ignores wishes of the existing residents
Too dense (2)
Ignores neighborhood input
Ugly to community, not what SLP needs, we do not need more apartments
Too many people? Would increase traffic/congestion
Height of building
Ugly
Not as family-oriented
Institutional

Other comments or suggestions:

Increased public safety issues
Will need a satellite police station in neighborhood, public safety issues
Use part of existing building for community center and senior activities center

Additional General Comments:

Very good mix of concepts — good job
Prefer single-family owned homes
Could mix single-family houses and townhouses
Keep the triangle on Cedar Lake Road; use it for enhancing aesthetics of the site reuse. The triangle area has great potential for: 1) preserving and enhancing neighborhood identity; 2) increasing design of project and neighborhood acceptance; 3) increasing aesthetic quality of site reuse.
Some concepts may meet City’s reuse principles but neighbors don’t like
Keep mature trees no matter what
We do not need a ton of apartments in SLP. We need bigger housing for families - that is who is moving out.
The format of the Site Reuse Evaluation form does not allow us to freely comment — “leads the witness” — it makes you see if it meets a set principle but not if we like the principle.
No option presented for single-family and townhouse mix
My preferences:

- Owner-occupied, non-rental, potential option for senior living
- Green space/play area accessible by neighborhood
- Pedestrian connection east/west
- Any larger site buildings to stay closer to Cedar Lake Road
- Mix of single-/multi-story homes and townhomes to better mix with current homes
- Be mindful of traffic/crime implications
In 15 minutes, I do not feel I can answer the principles as strong, moderate or weak without being misunderstood, so here is my general wants for the area:

- Reuse building as part civic and part housing, keeping front (Cedar Lake Road side) as community land — public open space — if don’t use part of building as civic, front lawn should be kept as park land
- Directly behind building should be parking and green space
- Balance of property to be 80 ft. lots with single-family one-story to 1-1/2 story houses — no high density and would complement existing scale of housing
- Enough parking so no need for on-street parking — each living unit/house needs enough parking spaces for 3 to 4 cars
- I know there is public green space in the area but they are not high quality park areas — I would want some of this property to be publicly owned
- Offer small patch across street to next door neighbors to extend their yards or for community garden space/park land garden
- Want property rezoned as single-family homes — not high density
- I feel reuse of building has great potential but I know money is the bottom line

- Buffer from traffic on Cedar Lake Road
- Consider traffic control and suitable environment, police and public safety capacity

Discussion of Site Reuse Principles

The group reviewed and discussed whether the preliminary site reuse principles were valid or not or needed revisions.

- Mix of Residential Land Uses — Keep this principle, modify it to require two types of housing
- Leverage Site’s Access to Community Amenities — Eliminate this principle, incorporate this guidance into the introduction to the reuse principles/design guidelines
- Community/Neighborhood Landmark, Gateway and Gathering places — Keep this principle, however the triangle open space and mature trees are the more important landmark to retain than the building
- Transition Building Density Across the Site — Keep this principle, clarify that the density should be higher south and transition to lower density on the northern portion of the site
- Complement Existing Development Scale and Character — Keep this principle
- Neighborhood Open Space — Keep this principle
- Neighborhood Connectivity — Combine this principle with Neighborhood Open Space principle
- Redevelopment Feasibility — Keep this principle
- Add an Owner-Occupied Uses principle
D. August 26, 2010 Task Force Meeting Notes

The draft Design Guidelines were presented and discussed at the August 26, 2010 meeting. The following modifications were suggested by the task force at the meeting:

1. Land use and development density - Remove the language that says the number of residential units allowed could be increased through the PUD process. Modify the language about civic/institutional buildings to clarify that they would be appropriate for the southern half of the site.

2. Add a guideline that addresses the small remnant piece of the Eliot property located east of Hampshire Avenue in the site design guidelines.

3. Parking - Remove the language about a potential transit ridership reduction as part of the PUD process. Clarify that off-street parking should be provided for residents and guests and any off-street surface parking areas should be located internally on the site.

4. Pedestrian circulation - Add that a mid-block pedestrian connection should be publicly accessible. Remove the specific language about the suggested width of the connection.

5. Building heights - Modify the minimum building height allowed to two stories rather than three, for the southern half of the site. Add a comment that the Eliot Re-use Taskforce preference is for lower building heights, if possible.

6. Facade entries and articulation - Clarify that buildings should include entries and direct sidewalk connections to the existing public sidewalks. Add a guideline that states building facade “fronts” should face existing public streets, where possible.

E. October 14, 2010 Neighborhood Meeting Input

The following written comments were received from attendees at this meeting:

» Prefer 3-4 stories, not 5 or more. No apartments. More consideration for move-up family housing.

» Is it necessary to have an open space. I don’t think people need to go into private property. No one will use it anyway. I’ve lived in the park 50 years and have never used the Eliot playground to get to Idaho Ave.

» I’ve lived on Hampshire for 19 years. There’s been minimal traffic during the day & none on weekends at the current Eliot site. It should stay that way. We don’t need any more multi buildings, that have 24/7 traffic & noise. Were a quiet neighborhood. Except for the apartment building in my backyard which is noisy & can see into my home (has trees between apt & my home). It generates & lot of foot traffic & trespassing into my yard. So I feel sorry for those people that will be living right next door to it. And they won’t be able to resell there homes, because of the building next to them looking down on them. *It’s zoned single family it should stay single family.* Also Hampshire park isn’t really a park any more, because you took out the play set years ago & never replaced it. It’s kind of useless. Eliot Park gets used daily. New houses will fit in just fine. A lot of the homes have been all redone on the outside since the hail storm. It really made a improvement to the neighborhood.
I would prefer single family homes. A larger structure coming into the neighborhood would be a determining factor in use moving out of the neighborhood. No apartment buildings! Not 4-5 stories. Has there been any expressed interest in the site? And by whom? Will Jersey neighborhood be kept in the loop as to what is going to happen at the site? Will we have the ability to be involved in the future process(es)? I want single family homes!

Nothing higher than 3 stories. Building front face streets & back from street with sidewalk.

Also:

A petition stating "No more than three stories – would prefer two" signed by 59 area residents, including five Task Force members.