

Public Workshop
Summary Memo



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PROJECT: Harrisburg PA | South Allison Hill U.S. EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Plan
DATES: April 9 - 12, 2018
SUBJECT: Visioning Week Notes and Initial Findings

April 9th to 12th, 2018 Community Workshop and Topic Meetings

Overview

The South Allison Hill Brownfields Area Wide Plan (AWP) is a neighborhood planning initiative funded by the U.S. EPA, one of nineteen communities nation-wide to receive AWP grant funding in 2017. The study area is defined by the city blocks located between 13th Street, 17th Street, Market Street, and Derry Street. In the late 19th century this was a thriving center of commercial activity. The area included the Harrisburg Foundry and Machine Works (where the Hamilton Health Center is located today) and the Harrisburg Boot and Shoe Company. Together these facilities along employed more than 1,400 people. One legacy of these activities are dozens of older, formerly industrial buildings and the assumption (if not fact) of the presence of environmental conditions which may be impairing their full utilization or reuse. The purpose of this endeavor is to assist the neighborhood, property owners, and the City to identify and document specific steps to remove barriers and unlock the economic reuse potential for properties that have been encumbered by real or perceived environmental conditions. It also focuses on developing costs for implementation and providing local leadership with an understanding of potentially available funding to support implementation, and a “road map” to pursue each funding source. Outcomes from the AWP effort are likely to focus on public investment such as improving pedestrian crosswalks, sidewalks, streetscapes, stormwater management, visual character, branding, and parking improvements. These and other potential improvements will be considered which will enhance community safety and foster long and short-term investment.

- ▶ **Community Workshop:** Between Monday April 10th and Thursday April 12th, the project team facilitated a number of informational and interactive working sessions:
 - Tuesday morning - Topic #1, Transportation, Connectivity, and Infrastructure:
 - Tuesday afternoon - Topic #2, Commerce, Retail, and Housing
 - Wednesday morning - Topic #3, Appearance, Design, and Environment
 - Wednesday evening - Open House and Public Workshop: starting at 4:30 the team hosted an open house informational session. A 6:30 presentation was followed by an interactive working session. A number of residents participated in the event.

- ▶ **A summary** of the discussions and key takeaways from the various meetings and informal discussions follows below.

- 1. The effort needs to build upon previous and ongoing plans especially the Tri-County Action (TCA), Capital Region Water (CRW), and the City’s Comprehensive Plan. These planning activities attracted a lot of community involvement as well as professional staff participation.** As a result of all of the previous work performed, this AWP project should be considered as a tool to: A.) Implement community goals identified by neighbors and Tri-County Community Action “Heart of the Hill” Action Plan; B.) Assist in the implementation and funding for some of CRW’s proposed projects that focus on South Allison Hill; C.) Develop an implementation strategy for needs identified in the Public Workshop; D.) Assist the neighborhood, property owners, and the City to identify and document specific projects that will remove barriers and unlock economic reuse potential for properties.

What’s next? Review the specific recommendations of the CRW, TAC, and the draft City Comprehensive Plan with the Project Team. Develop an approach for assigning priority. Learn the status of key projects and initiatives described in these plans. Report at the upcoming Committee Work session.

- 2. Establish a specific list of project objectives that align with community goals for employment, recreation, training, housing, safety improvements, and economic opportunity.** There were community concerns that some initiatives could potentially diminish existing businesses or accelerate displacement of existing residents. There was strong support for investment that brings employment and economic opportunities to the neighborhood.

What’s next? Draft a mission statement, project objectives, and evaluation metrics for discussion, based on community feedback and project team research.

- 3. Focus on public investment such as pedestrian improvements/crosswalks, sidewalks, stormwater management, and parking improvements which will enhance community safety, supporting future private investment.** The initial work focused on the existing conditions of the study area as they relate to traffic flows, intersection capacities, transportation infrastructure, transit services, utilities, and hydrology/flooding.

Potential investments by topic include:

Street improvements and initial analysis describing needs of present and future users:

- In order to understand vehicular movement in the study area the project team is conducting traffic counts at four intersections: Market Street at 13th and 17th Streets and Derry Street, also at 13th and 17th Streets. The data collection confirms that morning traffic flows through the study area are relatively balanced north to south but greater in the westward direction (towards downtown Harrisburg) indicating commuter flows. Evening traffic flows also indicate strong commuter presence. The study can support future intersection improvements that will improve circulation and pedestrian experience.

- One-way roadways and narrow roadways surrounding Hamilton Health Center especially, pose access constraints between 13th and 17th Streets. The existing traffic control and roadway configuration is confusing for non-local motorists and are restrictive for truck movements.
- Because of the presence of on-street parking near intersections, vehicles egressing side streets frequently have little available corner sight distance to see oncoming cars or cyclists.
- A major project that needs to be accounted for in future development scenarios is the Interstate 83, East Shore, Section 3 project, currently in preliminary engineering by PennDOT. Construction may begin as early as 2022. Traffic volumes on 13th, and 17th Streets will be affected; however, details will not be known until the design is finalized.

Parking and curbside management improvements are to include loading, transit bus boarding, landscaping, informational signage, and stormwater facilities. This could tie in to a TCA/HRA initiative to create and manage off-street parking at various locations. There is interest in a Parking Management Plan for the area. This would be a useful component to support investment in new businesses and encourage the expansion of existing operations as well as address resident needs.

Structured Parking if it were ever to occur should be in “convertible buildings.” Surface parking requires space that could be used for other development. Where feasible, parking for some employees, customers, and possibly residents should be considered in a multi-level structure. It is certain that future technological improvements and autonomous vehicles will change the ways cars, streets, and parking lots are used. Therefore, any proposed parking structure should be designed with level, rather than sloped floors, and sufficient space between levels so that a future use other than parking can be accommodated – such as apartments or workspace.

Green Stormwater Infrastructure(GSI) and public space improvements may include small parks, attractive plantings, “pocket parking” and pedestrian improvements. Specific locations of significant stormwater issues were noted near the intersection of 18th Street and Sullivan Alley and the intersection of Market Street and 14th Street.

Public Transit: Twelve (12) Capital Area Transit (CAT) bus routes travel through the study area. Of these, the Route 1 – Market Street is the most frequently used. It was observed that CAT bus stops near the study area intersections impede/disrupt traffic flow. At the same time, it is desirable to increase the convenience of the CAT system to reduce traffic and the need for parking in the area.

Improved walking routes and Safe Routes to School are needed in the study area. Mayflower Street was identified as a potential path. Pedestrian routes could include GSI, lighting, and landscape improvements.

What’s next? The Community Workshop and Topic Sessions identified some of the specific streets and intersections that should be made better, safer, and more attractive. Several traffic and flooding “hotspots” were identified. These were also described as priority projects in city plans. The AWP should make specific recommendations for improvement, confirm or establish priorities, and suggest sources for implementation funding. This will include

investigation of Safe-Routes-To-School Program support, review or suggestion of “Pocket Parking” opportunities, and preparation of concept sketches and image boards depicting infrastructure projects (e.g. stormwater management, parking, and pedestrian improvements).

4. Build on the real momentum and ongoing public investment focusing on South Allison Hill.

There is a lot going on here!

Derry Street streetscape: This ongoing work will greatly improve the appearance and performance of the street. New landscape elements, street trees, lighting, pavements, stormwater facilities, as well as traffic and crossing signals are planned. Initial improvements are planned from MulDer Square east to 15th Street and a second phase is being designed that will reach 18th Street.

Mulder Square (just west of the Study Area) - The \$20 million Mulder Square project is a partnership between Dauphin County, Tri-County Housing Development Corporation, Harrisburg Housing Authority, Harrisburg Redevelopment Authority, and Brethren Housing. Mulder Square gets its name from the two main streets in the neighborhood - Mulberry and Derry. The City has received a \$3 million grant for traffic and pedestrian improvements, new sidewalks, curbs, and trees. The project will eliminate blight, increase home ownership, and greatly expand affordable housing options. The initial phase includes four new townhomes which will be 1,200-square-foot with three bedrooms. The plan is to redevelop 15 Harrisburg Redevelopment Authority properties and one privately owned property into 48 new, high-quality, affordable apartments. The Harrisburg Housing Authority will construct three new buildings: one 26-unit; one 21-unit; and one 3-unit. The first floor of the 26-unit building will house commercial space that is planned for use as a pharmacy.

Recent City Zoning Code updates and the ongoing Comprehensive Plan mark the first major update to the zoning code since 1950. The effort to revamp the City’s zoning code began about five years ago in an effort to streamline and simplify a code that had become overly complex and even obsolete, according to the City. The new Comprehensive Plan acknowledges Allison Hill as one the City’s seven primary districts and offers specific policy goals and objectives to guide private development, public improvements, and institutional investment over the coming decades. Specific goals include redevelopment of “abandoned and underutilized property along the former railroad spur as a pedestrian space and a neighborhood commercial corridor”... “A vibrant public space incorporating social, economic, and recreational activities to reactivate former manufacturing buildings.” A later section develops this concept as Meander Park, an apparently public facility, generating great concern on the part of property owners. The park is omitted from the present review version of the Comprehensive Plan document. This was a point of discussion at the topic meetings, as was an interest in expanding the list of permitted uses and exploring the potential of form-based and performance-based regulation, encouraging flexibility, and home-based businesses.

Capital Regional Water’s CBH2O Master Plan and Implementation Schedule. The City and CRW are responsible for reducing sediment and nitrogen levels discharging into the Chesapeake Bay via Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) through a Consent Decree with the

U.S. EPA. The Community Greening Plan is a Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) strategy to guide stormwater projects and policies going forward. The City and residents will, over time, realize significant economic and environmental benefits from stronger and more coordinated management of Harrisburg's open spaces and natural resources, especially through integrated stormwater management improvements. The Plan vividly documents GSI design solutions that could be deployed in the study area. The Plan also documents specific hydraulic and structural problems in South Allison Hill, such as standing water in streets and basement flooding, as high priority needs to be addressed.

Hamilton Health Center has brought access to needed medical services to the area and is a real catalyst for the ongoing rejuvenation of the neighborhood. The project repurposed an 88,000-square-foot former state-owned print shop and warehouse and cleaned up and reoccupied an adjacent four-acre portion of the former Allison Hill Automotive property (originally part of the Harrisburg Foundry and Machine Works). The completed project has created a medical mall—giving residents access to a wide range of services under one roof, including adult medicine, pediatrics, women's health, and dental services. The center also provides room for the Women, Infant, and Children Supplemental Feeding Program (WIC), behavioral health services, and special services for individuals with HIV/AIDS. A full-service pharmacy is operated by The Medicine Shoppe as well as laboratory services provided by Quest Diagnostics are also located at the center.

A History of Public Investment in Allison Hill includes: Community Development Block Grants, the Capital Corridors project, numerous façade improvements, McFarland Boulevard, Allison Hill I and II (residential), YWCA, Elm St., Wachovia Regional Foundation Grants I, II, and Prospectus Plan, Hamilton Health Center, PCCD Weed and Seed Grants I, II, III, and Tri County Housing Association Housing developments.

What's next? The record of planning, public investment, and accomplishment is a demonstration of the talent and resources deployed here. The AWP will focus on specific projects that will remove barriers to private investment and update obsolescing infrastructure. The project team will research anticipated funding needs for the implementation of priority projects, match these to local resources when possible, and review updated land use regulations and plans to identify controls that are/are not aligned with desired outcomes.

5. The AWP needs to identify specific business prospects likely to support future public and private investment in buildings, businesses, jobs, and infrastructure; including:

Food-based businesses. Preparation, packaging, marketing, distribution, and dining, as well as a training element that could engage local residents. Farmers market and restaurant were mentioned as related spin-off activities. The Broad Street Market is looking for satellite locations. Union Kitchen (located in the Washington DC area) was mentioned as a model for food-based activities that could potentially flourish here.

Medical supplies and services. It was noted that the Coca-Cola building has a suitable layout and secure loading area for any number of medical or food-related high-hygiene/high security production activities.

Child care and learning. For example, Head Start is looking for good locations that can meet fit-out and locational standards.

Job training, workforce readiness. Space for existing or new provider/vendors are needed as well as expansion opportunities for existing businesses, shops, trainers, and contractors.

Auto care and repair. A review is needed as to how permitted activity related to auto care is described by present zoning regulations.

Industry that can be “good neighbors.” Production activities could occupy existing, formerly industrial buildings e.g. advanced manufacturing, artisan fabricators, showroom retail, and light industry.

A community health and services campus that is “anchored” by the Hamilton Health Center. The campus is anticipated to include expanded services such as, prepared food (e.g. a sandwich shop), fitness center, behavioral health, social services, vet clinic, or childcare, as well as a potential parking deck. It is anticipated that improvements to streets, sidewalks, and landscaping may be implemented concurrently.

A good image. Mulder Square to the west and potentially the “Big Ugly” Warehouse reuse to the east, along with previously mentioned emerging Community Health and Services Campus (expanded HCC) to the north, are significant developments at key neighborhood locations. As these projects move toward implementation, it will generate confidence in the local economy and effectively reduce the perceived risk to funders, investors, and entrepreneurs.

What’s next? Continue to evolve and refine reuse plans, economic development scenarios, and business recruitment objectives. Explore specific building concepts with owners and project partners. Evaluate and add to this list of existing and potential business types that may be interested in locating or expanding in the study area. Provide guidance for establishing priorities. The Steering Committee will assist the project team in contacting property owners.

6. Identify opportunities to assist with ongoing projects, mostly focused on greening and dual use infrastructure.

Assist Tri-County Action with the selection, design and maintenance of sites that are improved through TCA’s “Receive and Transform” vacant lot program.

Provide best practices for greening and dual use infrastructure

Map additional opportunities for community gardens and “pocket parking” management and maintenance; potentially collaborating with Joshua Farm.

Describe specific applications of the CRW concepts for properties outside the Right-of-way and explain/illustrate the high priority improvements planned for SAH streets.

What’s next? Coordinate the AWP recommendations with ongoing initiatives and capital plans. The Steering Committee and Project Team will identify specific opportunities and document detailed project descriptions so that cost information can be developed.

7. **Explore the reported need for “customer friendly” oversight. Property owners, developers and real estate professionals describe the project permitting and review process as being exceptionally difficult, much more so than other municipalities.** Issues cited include complicated, changing rules, unanswered calls, surly officials, protracted hearings and reviews, high fees, and over-control of the trades. Whether this is perception or fact, the City’s reputation for being “really hard to work with” is considered a detriment by any developer, builder, or business looking to relocate or expand. The City’s weekly land development meetings (now suspended) and Pittsburgh’s Department of Permits, Licenses, & Inspections were mentioned as potential models for improvement.

What’s next? Given that the AWP process precludes recommending modifications to local land use and development regulations, the AWP process is limited to documenting current conditions and potential conflicts between reuse recommendations and existing regulations.

8. **Open new channels for community and local leadership to keep informed and stay involved.** Check the HRA website. Project Updates will be posted regularly.

What’s next? Complete initial exhibits to post on the HRA website. Provide links to exhibits and presentation material. Circulate a detailed schedule for upcoming meetings and/or milestones. Review materials created by the Consultant Team to be posted or shared with press. Steering Committee to communicate to neighbors and local leadership about priority projects and the implementation focus of the AWP project. Communicate with project partners that will need to endorse recommendations and funding requests.

Project Schedule

- ▶ A Physical Conditions Background Report is being prepared which will be available for public review mid-summer. This will include summaries by topic as they related to reuse planning.
- ▶ A Market Conditions Analysis Report is being prepared which will be available for public review mid-summer. This report will hone in on specific uses that have been identified as potential reuse opportunities within the study area.
- ▶ A Framework Reuse Plan will be prepared which depicts conceptual reuse strategies and locations for improvements and potential projects. This framework will serve as the basis to determine community priorities and determine potential project feasibility. This plan will be available for public review in early Fall and will serve as the basis for determining how to proceed to more detailed study on high priority recommendations.
- ▶ A public workshop that presents recommendation alternatives for consideration will be held in early Fall. The intent of the workshop will be to gather specific input and comments on the various options being considered for community improvement and revitalization.