

EPA Technical Assistance for Sustainable Communities

Building Blocks

Technical Assistance Tool: Sustainable Design + Development

Syracuse, NY – May 25 – 26, 2011

To: Andrew Maxwell, City of Syracuse Planning Bureau

From: Dennis Carmichael, AECOM

Date: May 31, 2011

Re: Suggested Next Steps as Outcome of Technical Assistance

1. Key Issues Addressed during the Site Visit

We addressed a variety of issues on a city wide basis, including:

- Abandonment/vacancies of homes in existing neighborhoods
- Pedestrian/bicycling connectivity
- Mixed use developments
- Employment generation

As we focused in on the Erie Boulevard/Teall Avenue site, additional issues came to light including:

- Preservation/enhancement of adjacent industrial uses
- Workforce training for those industries and new ones to follow
- Creating a gateway to the site from I-690
- Using open space as an amenity to attract redevelopment
- Providing better pedestrian/bicycling connections to the site from neighborhoods north and south

2. Targeted Policies/Ideas/Strategies Discussed during the Workshop

The stakeholder groups created three alternative visions for the Erie Boulevard/Teall Avenue site, with some ideas in common and some ideas unique to each group. The ideas/strategies in common included:

- Building upon the presence of adjacent industrial areas and respecting their uses as job and tax generators
- Creating strong pedestrian connections to the site from adjacent streets to the south and east to allow for people to walk or bicycle to the redeveloped site
- Creating a central open space as an amenity for site users and visitors
- Providing vehicular access to the site from Teall Avenue , but not from Erie Boulevard
- Providing primary building entries along Erie Boulevard for visibility and pedestrian access
- Minimizing onsite parking to encourage walking and cycling
- Buffering the views to the existing industrial uses to the north by positioning new buildings on the north side of the site

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Ideas and strategies that were unique to individual plans included:

- Urban agriculture in the landscaped open space as a demonstration of local food cultivation
- Reuse of waste products from adjacent uses in the buildings and open spaces
- Creation of a vocational/technical school for training of workforce for nearby industries and new industries
- Creation of a building deconstruction and salvage business as an employment generator, which would also reduce the waste stream
- Preservation of the existing volunteer emergent forest on the west side of the site as the landscape open space
- Provision of rain gardens on the northeast side of the site to reduce storm water runoff
- Solar panels on low building roofs for water heating
- Green roofs on taller building for insulation value
- Transit stops or bus shelters on Erie Boulevard
- Bicycle path on the median of Erie Boulevard
- Reduction of a lane of traffic on Erie Boulevard and provision of a dual left turn at Teall Avenue
- Creation of pedestrian connections to the existing industries to the north and east
- Vision of increased density and mixed use retail/residential along Erie Boulevard as a result of the redevelopment of the site
- Inclusion of day care for employees of the site
- Extension of sidewalks and crosswalks north to and beyond I-690 to facilitate pedestrian /cyclist access to the site from neighborhoods to the north

3. Barriers to Implementation

We discussed the following issues as potential impediments to moving forward:

- Ownership / maintenance of Erie Boulevard and Teall Avenue by NYS DOT
- Lack of public dollars for public improvements
- Contamination of site and the cost of cleanup
- Identification of an operator for a vocational/technical school
- Lack of workforce training opportunities in the city
- Economic feasibility of deconstruction/salvage business model
- I-690 as a physical barrier for pedestrians and cyclists to the north
- Location of site not within any identifiable neighborhood

4. Actions to Address Strategies

We discussed the following actions that could be taken to overcome any barriers and move the project toward implementation:

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- Creating a public/private partnership with adjacent industrial users and the city to clarify workforce training agenda
- Coordination and collaboration with NYS DOT on issues for improving pedestrian and cyclist access and movement along Erie Boulevard and Teall Avenue
- Market feasibility and economic impact studies for the site to determine viability of strategies
- Survey of local neighborhoods to ascertain local work skills, employment needs, and training gaps
- Engagement with Office of Economic Development to learn what programs or funds they may have that are relevant
- Marketing plan by Planning Bureau to publicize the site to the development community
- Coordination with ongoing complete streets study already underway to see if site could be a demonstration project
- Engage the city council person and mayor to have them take a leadership role in moving the plan forward, especially with regard to the idea of a vocational/technical school
- Create a public investment in the streetscape of Erie Boulevard and Teall Avenue to improve pedestrian and bicycle access and to demonstrate public confidence in the project
- Seek brownfield remediation funds for cleanup effort

5. Timeframe for Accomplishing Actions

Near term actions (1-3 months)

- Creation of public/private partnership with adjacent industries
- Coordination/collaboration with NYS DOT on Erie Boulevard and Teall Avenue issues
- Engagement with Office of Economic Development
- Coordination with ongoing complete streets study
- Engage city council person and mayor

Mid-term actions (3-6 months)

- Market feasibility and economic impact study
- Survey of local neighborhoods
- Seek brownfield remediation funds

Long term actions (6-12 months)

- Marketing plan by Planning Bureau
- Public investment in streetscape

6. Implementation Coordination

Based upon our understanding of your city agency structure, the Planning Bureau is the logical lead agency for this effort. Support and assistance from Economic Development, Public Works, and the school board will also be required to implement this project. However, Planning Bureau staff has the skills to guide this idea to reality.