

April 18, 2006

**MEMORANDUM**

From: Katie Irwin  
Jeffrey Luker

To: All Persons Present

RE: CIRCLE MANOR  
Kensington, MD  
QE|A Proj. No.: 06236

Subject: Community Workshop – Saturday April 8, 2006

On Saturday April 8, 2006 Montgomery County Parks and Planning (MNCPPC) and the Town of Kensington sponsored a Community Workshop focused upon understanding the Kensington Communities aspirations and concerns relevant to future use of the former Brainard Warner Mansion referred to as Circle Manor located in the center of Kensington, MD. QUINN EVANS|ARCHITECTS (QE|A) assisted the MNCPPC and Citizen Volunteers in developing the Workshop Agenda, and served as Facilitator for the Meeting. The following notes provide a summary record of the Workshop discussion and presentations.

1. The Workshop was well attended, approximately 60 persons participated and nearly all of the participants contributed a whole day to the effort, beginning at 9:00 AM and finishing at 3:00 PM. A copy of the sign in log is attached. The Workshop room was organized among 10 tables with 6-8 participants at each table. Participants at each table served as an ad-hoc working group responsible to discuss ideas and present findings during the Workshop. Each participant was given a "Background Facts" sheet with the property's historic significance, facts of the site's acquisition, facts of the funding and reuse partnership with the town of Kensington, regulatory framework for reuse options, and reference websites.
2. After coffee provided by Café Monet, the Workshop began at 9:25AM with a welcome by Wat Stewart. The Workshop began with two Circle Sessions designed to establish a cooperative tone and summarize objectives relevant to the Workshop.
3. Expectations from the Workshop Participants – (Circle Session #1)

Representatives selected from several tables were asked to discuss their expectations for the Workshop; they offered the following ideas:

- a. Future development of the Property should create a gathering place, a setting to bring the Town together.
- b. The Development should create a legacy, something that the town founder would have wanted.
- c. Future development should preserve the feeling of the place.
- d. The Development should bring something to help the economy.

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e. There should be an understanding of the cost considerations to assure that the future development is economically viable.

4. At 9:45AM, Lynn Raufaste, mayor of Kensington, and Derek Berlage, MNCPPC planning board chairman, each spoke a few words to the workshop participants. Lynn Raufaste suggested that change is not always bad, that traffic should be considered with any new development, and that the development should fit into the community. Derek Berlage, MNCPPC planning board chairman then spoke. He hoped that the open space would be preserved and would be used to serve the community.

5. **Expectations from the Town Leaders – (Circle Session #2)**

Similar to the first Circle Session, five leaders from the town representing various groups were invited to state their expectations for the Workshop; they offered the following ideas:

- a. Future development should preserve the existing open green space and the existing structures on the property.
- b. Future development should find a way to celebrate the heart of the town.
- c. The Development should create something that would fit into the town and be mindful of any traffic concerns.
- d. The Development should create something that would reflect the historic resource.
- e. This Workshop and the ongoing planning effort should serve as a model example of successful collective decision making.

6. At 10:00AM, QE|A presented the Workshop Agenda and explained the work-group format. The Workshop would focus in two parts. The first, morning agenda would focus on developing an understanding of the principles relevant to future development of the Property. The second, afternoon agenda would focus on identifying possible use scenarios and understanding how relevant principles might be addressed under the use scenarios.

7. **Principles - Full Group Brainstorm**

- a. All participants were asked to suggest development principles. Suggestions were stated aloud for everyone to hear and then written down on a large notepad for all to see. As sheets were filled, they were hung up on the walls. The following is the resulting list of ideas transcribed from the large notepad:
  - i. Retain the green space and make it into something useful.
  - ii. Any development use should be community enriching.
  - iii. Retain and preserve the mansion.
  - iv. Community input should guide the development decisions.
  - v. Intergenerational activities should continue.
  - vi. Preserve the specimen trees and continue to add to the collection.
  - vii. Provide public access for all residents. Create a town center.
  - viii. Any development should be financially sustainable.
  - ix. Preserve the house and the interiors. Maintain the house to the Dept. of the Interiors Standards of Rehabilitation.
  - x. Preserve the barn and the interiors.
  - xi. Development should be aesthetically pleasing.
  - xii. Provide a cultural use.
  - xiii. The new use would not ignore or desert the historic time periods of the property.

- xiv. Long term use should have an economic view.
- xv. Circle Manor should become a visitor attraction that makes sense and recognizes the importance of the property.
- xvi. Any decisions made should be long-lasting.

## 8. Principles - Small Group Recommendations

- a. At 10:10, the participants were asked to discuss development principles at each of their tables for thirty minutes. They were encouraged to use the "Site Analysis and Development Principles" worksheet (a 24"x36" sheet of paper with an aerial photograph of the property and room to write) to write down or draw their ideas.
  - b. At 10:45, a representative from each table came to the front of the room with their table's worksheet and presented their recommendations for development principles. Copies of the workgroup presentation sheets are attached. As they presented, the principles were written down on the large notepad for all to see. As sheets were filled, (while checking and merging duplicate principles), they were hung up on the walls.
9. At 11:10, the participants voted on the development principles. Each participant received 10 stickers with which to vote on any principle with any number of stickers (up to their entire allotment). The following is transcribed from the large notepad on which all the tables' recommendations were merged:
- i. Any development use should be dynamic and community enriching. (28 votes)
  - ii. Arts and cultural uses are preferred. (26 votes)
  - iii. Any development must be economically viable and sustainable. (29 votes)
  - iv. Historic and non-historic or new structures should be clearly defined and visible. (2 votes)
  - v. Provide a variety of uses – both economical/affordable and intergenerational. (5 votes)
  - vi. Preserve the 360 degrees of green space with conservation easements. (28 votes)
  - vii. Preserve and maintain the trees (utilizing professional arborists). (19 votes)
  - viii. Provide community access to the open space on the property in perpetuity. (10 votes)
  - ix. Preserve the mansion and its interiors (before 1955).
  - x. Preserve the barn/carriage house and its interiors. (14 votes)
  - xi. Limit the amount and intensity of uses. (4 votes)
  - xii. Limit the parking to the existing number (30). (6 votes)
  - xiii. No additional paving and care should be taken to control stormwater runoff. (5 votes)
  - xiv. No additional building square footage should be added to the property.
  - xv. Limit noise.
  - xvi. Limit the traffic. Keep the air clean. (2 votes)
  - xvii. Allow an agency or government tenant use for the short-term. (6 votes)
  - xviii. Increase the green space. (1 vote)
  - xix. Any new structure(s) must be architecturally compatible. (3 votes)
  - xx. Any new structure(s) must be contextual to the neighborhood and have a similar feel or ambiance. (5 votes)
  - xxi. The same balance or ratio of green space to structures must be maintained. (9 votes)
  - xxii. Enhance the landscape. (1 vote)
  - xxiii. Provide educational, historic, and recreational uses. (18 votes)



- xxiv. Any new structures should have an appropriate massing and scale to the existing site. (2 votes)
- xxv. No "mansionizations." (2 votes)
- xxvi. Preserve the interiors. (1 vote)
- xxvii. Consider funding when developing the use. (3 votes)
- xxviii. Maintain a partnership between the county and town. (20 votes)
- xxix. Maintain the property as a focal point of the town. (20 votes)
- xxx. No private sale or subdivision development. (16 votes)
- xxxi. Provide reasonable public access to the property. (9 votes)
- xxxii. No litter. (2 votes)
- xxxiii. No compromising of public safety. (5 votes)
- xxxiv. Low light impact. (3 votes)
- xxxv. Preserve the house, barn, and grounds.
- xxxvi. Any development or use should reflect the history of the town (the plan of the house is similar to the plan of the town). (10 votes)
- xxxvii. Any development or use should have long-term viability. (15 votes)
- xxxviii. Any new structures should be compatible in scale to the historic house. (1 vote)
- xxxix. Restore the integrity of the house and the outbuildings. (6 votes)
- xl. No affordable housing. (36 votes)

10. As the voting period was closed, QE|A noted that the Participants had completed the morning part of the Agenda; individually and as a group the Participants had listed, presented and voted on principles that should inform future development and use of the Circle Manor Property.

#### 11. Use – Full Group Brainstorm

- a. At 11:45AM, all the participants were asked to suggest compatible uses for the property. Suggestions were stated aloud for everyone to hear and then written down on a large notepad for all to see. As sheets were filled, they were hung up on the walls. The following is transcribed from the large notepad:
  - i. Short term county agency such as the historic preservation commission.
  - ii. A small academy for educational purposes
  - iii. Bed and breakfast with a restaurant (run by students in a hotel program)
  - iv. Restaurant
  - v. Historic foundation offices
  - vi. Community Center with meeting rooms and activities for both children and seniors
  - vii. Community activities and public access to the grounds
  - viii. House and grounds could be leased for receptions (like Strathmore Hall or the Rockville Mansion)
  - ix. Disabled housing (providing a live/work partnership, i.e. ground maintenance could be performed by the residents)
  - x. Vocational school, community classes (i.e. business classes)
  - xi. Senior housing (adult day programs, intergenerational programs, assisted living)
  - xii. Nursing home (partnership with the town)
  - xiii. Small business (at the house)
  - xiv. Senior condominiums
  - xv. Artist studios (at the carriage house), (like the Torpedo Factory)
  - xvi. Montessori school with a shared use (cultural and community)
  - xvii. Disabled persons' use

- xviii. Arts classes, educational classes
- xix. Non-profit foundation headquarters (historic, music, environmental)
- xx. Artist studios (entire site)

12. At 12:30, the Workshop took a break for lunch. Lunch was provided by the Town of Kensington.

### 13. Use – Small Group Recommendations

- a. The Workshop resumed at 1:00PM. Each table was given one "Compatible Uses & Redevelopment Ideas" worksheet (a 24"x36" sheet of paper with a site plan of the property and room to write) for the following uses: Arts/Cultural, Bed and Breakfast (at two different tables due to its popularity), Foundation/Institutional, Housing, Mixed Use. The participants were then asked to go to a table of their choosing to work on the opportunities, constraints, and viability of that particular use. Each group was encouraged to use the worksheet to write or draw their ideas. There were approximately 4-8 people at each table.
- b. At 1:30PM, a representative from each table came to the front of the room with their table's worksheet and presented their ideas pertaining to a particular uses. Copies of the workgroup presentation sheets are attached..
- c. Arts/ Cultural
  - i. The Arts/ Cultural team segmented the property into various areas relating to a specific art (i.e. studio art, film, music). They decided to have a tie-in with the Children's Library with a Children's Reading Garden. The Carriage House would house artist studios. Concerts and films would occur on the north area of the lawn.
  - ii. There is even a possibility for a culinary institute and bed and breakfast partnership with the existing house. There are several local partnering possibilities including Montgomery Community College, American Film Institute, Roundhouse Theater, Culinary Institute, University of Maryland, and Marriott.
  - iii. Artists-in-residence (or chefs-in-residence) could have temporary affordable housing in exchange for teaching classes for the community thereby bringing in out-of-town talent into Kensington. These arts and cultural activities would create a dynamic use for the property.
  - iv. Opportunities: partnerships, revenue through leased space, enriching the community, variety of topics, green space preservation, maintaining the relationship of the buildings to the county and the town, multi-generational activities
  - v. Constraints: noise (films, concerts), trash from events, crowds, partners/sponsors
- d. Bed and Breakfast #1
  - i. The Bed and Breakfast team thought that a local college could host a bed and breakfast with their students in finance management and food service. A bed and breakfast would be income-producing through its room rentals, restaurant, and special events. Additionally, it would put Kensington on the map and give it instant exposure.
  - ii. The renovation of the property would also present an opportunity for local colleges or for the historic preservation commission through research, learning a trade, and preservation methods.



- iii. The grounds would be available to the public for biking and walking. The main house, dining area, and kitchen would be reused. The addition (nursing home rooms) would support housing for grounds upkeep and functions for the bed and breakfast. The carriage house would support the bed and breakfast sales and house artist studios. A greenhouse could be added to the property. It could be run by a local college to provide a learning opportunity. Plants could be grown for Kensington and for sale. There could be a joint venture with Marriot as a source of support for the bed and breakfast.

e. Foundation/Institutional

- i. A foundation or institutional use would likely house a non-profit. One of the opportunities is that this use has a viable business plan. A foundation or institutional use also matches the mission of Kensington and advances the philosophy of the town. A use of this type would benefit the community and the community abroad. The property could also be a short-term residence for educators and lecturers. This use would develop and improve the town physically.
- ii. Opportunities: Advantages include economic viability and sustainability, a working business plan, opportunity for a public/private partnership (i.e. with Marriott). A nonprofit organization could pay the rent in advance to help finance the town and in return receive affordable rental space. The deal could be structured that the capital could be used for the restoration phase and help off-set the town/county debt.
- iii. A foundation or institutional use would be a low intensity use with working hours of 9-5 or shorter. On off-times (i.e. holidays), the town would have public access to the green space for celebrations and other events. There would be no additional redevelopment. The annex could be removed and replaced with a Victorian style office space. There would be no increase in traffic or large service trucks. This property would be a positive exposure for the tenant. The tenant would be a friendly tenant. A benefit for the tenant would be the proximity to Washington, DC.
- iv. Constraints: This use would be sustainable economically but this could also be a constraint if there was a an extended lease for more permanence. It would be important to attract the right groups for this use. Another constraint would be limited public access to all or parts of the house. There would have to be a contract with the organization for public access to the spaces inside. A constraint could be that the use is not as viable a use like senior housing.

f. Housing

- i. This team looked at the possibilities for senior housing and/or disabled persons housing. They proposed that the use would demolish the 1955 addition and rebuild new housing in its place.
- ii. Opportunities: This use would continue the previous nursing home function. It would allow for community access. The use would also fulfill a community need.
- iii. Constraints: This use is financially limited. The property (with the existing building footprint and square footage) may only allow for approximately 40 units. In order for senior housing to break even there would need to be at least 60 units. The site is restrictive currently. There would need to be 3 stories on the present footprint. There would be architectural constraints on the new structure. The question for who owns and/or operates the housing is of concern. There may not be many who would be interested in owning or operating senior housing with a limited number of units.



- iv. Possible alternates include senior co-op units. They would be upscale units and would work for those in the high-end income range. This would not meet the need for middle of the spectrum incomes.
- v. Additionally, a short-term county agency could occupy the site until a resolution is found. There is also the potential to place a structure on top of the existing parking area for more units which would increase the viability of this use.
- vi. There is a need for reasonable work-force housing (middle-income) in the county. If this use can be placed on the site then Kensington could be a model for other communities and bring prestige to the country. Also the inter-generational aspect might be met.

g. Mixed Use

- i. This team matched up the other uses and tried to see the compatibility between combinations of uses. Four out of approximately nine uses appeared to be compatible.
  - 1. Bed and Breakfast with Senior Housing are not compatible due to the necessary size of each in order to be viable.
  - 2. Bed and Breakfast with a School are not compatible, except for a culinary school. Again, the size requirements would exclude each other.
  - 3. Bed and Breakfast with an Arts/Cultural use are compatible. The mansion would house the bed and breakfast use while the carriage house would host the arts/cultural uses.
  - 4. Bed and Breakfast with a Non-Profit are compatible. The mansion would house the bed and breakfast use while the carriage house would host the administrative offices for the non-profit.
  - 5. Senior Housing with an Arts/Cultural use are compatible. The mansion would be the senior housing and the carriage house would host the arts/cultural uses. Both functions would be quiet uses with low impact on the site.
  - 6. Senior Housing with a School are not compatible due to the noise factor of the school.
  - 7. Senior Housing with a Non-Profit are not compatible due to the necessary size of each in order to be viable.
  - 8. School and an Arts/ Cultural use are potentially compatible. A Montessori school and an arts/cultural use are not compatible because of the noise factor of the school. This combination could work if the arts/cultural use occurred only on the weekends and the playground location was away from the carriage house. An adult educational school and an arts/cultural use are compatible. Both would have a low impact of noise and host similar activities.
  - 9. School and a Non-Profit are not compatible due to the necessary size of each in order to be viable.
- ii. The team then filtered the above combinations by the principles developed in the morning. These are the top three combinations of uses that could work on the property:
  - 1. Arts/Cultural use with a Non-Profit: The carriage house would have the arts/cultural uses and the mansion would house the non-profit. The annex could be reconfigured (with the existing square footage) and renovated to be more architecturally compatible. The grounds could be open all the time while the non-profit use is inside the mansion. The non-profit could be willing to open the mansion to the

- public for special events. Both uses would have be low impact on the property with minimal noise and traffic.
2. School with an Arts/Cultural use: Both are compatible uses with the right type of school.
3. Senior Housing with an Arts/Cultural use: Both would have a low impact on the property with minimal noise and traffic.

h. Bed and Breakfast #2

- i. This team looked at a comparison between a restaurant and a bed and breakfast on the property as well as other similar functions.
- ii. One constraint on both uses is the fact that alcohol can not be served in Kensington. Another would be that the operator of the bed and breakfast would need a lot of money up front to start the bed and breakfast. It may be necessary for the bed and breakfast to combine with another partner. A culinary school and restaurant together on the property could serve brunches and high tea but they would compete with the other smaller cafes in town.
- iii. There is the opportunity for a culinary school to have a public/private partnership. A vocational school could operate the house and provide landscape design, restaurant management, and hotel management services. A culinary school or department could also serve reasonably priced food.
- iv. A conference center could occupy the property once the existing buildings were renovated. The property could be used for wedding receptions and other events. One constraint would be the additional traffic.
- v. One advantage to this type of food/hotel use on the property would be its proximity to Washington, DC.
- vi. There is also the potential for a combination assisted living and culinary school partnership. The assisted living would most likely have a restaurant that could be operated by the culinary school.

14. At 2:25PM, Gwen Wright, Historic Preservation Supervisor for Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning, provided a recap of the day's events and talked about putting the worksheets and meeting minutes on the website with a public forum for comments. She then presented the "Next Steps" for the Workshops' work to guide the Memorandum of Understanding and the eventual development/future use of the property.

15. Wat Stewart closed the Workshop at 2:30PM with positive remarks on the day's work. Participants, facilitators, and organizers were all given enthusiastic applause for their productive efforts.

Attached: Following is a list of attachments created during the Workshop:

- SITE ANALYSIS; Redevelopment Principles  
6 Presentation Worksheets prepared by individual workgroups
- REDEVELOPMENT VISION; Compatible Uses and Redevelopment Ideas  
6 Presentation Worksheets prepared by individual workgroups

END OF MEMORANDUM