

WARDS CORNER CIVIC LEAGUE

On February 24, 2014 the Wards Corner Civic League held their regular monthly meeting at the Fitness and Wellness Center. On the agenda was a discussion of the proposals for, and possible redevelopment of, the Meadowbrook School.

After a discussion among the members, a motion and a second were made to support the Meadowbrook Civic League's position as printed in their online petition:

- A minimum of 1.5 acres of the site will be permanently designated as a City owned and maintained park (OSP zoning), preferably fronting the 1600 block of Trouville Avenue, with adequate off-street parking for park users.
- Fire station No. 12 may be relocated to the western-most 1.5 acres of the site, provided the building's architecture is compatible with the adjacent Meadowbrook residential area, all traffic ingress/egress is via Hampton Blvd. or W. Little Creek Rd., and sufficient noise abatement measures, vegetative screening and on-site parking are provided.
- A maximum of 1.5 acres of the site may be reused/redeveloped as single-family homes, provided these homes are primarily brick-faced, have adequate off-street parking, and are zoned R-5, in keeping with the majority of adjacent homes in the Meadowbrook neighborhood. As a condition of sale, the City shall require the developer(s) to enter into a development agreement and deed restrictions, restricting the zoning, use, height and facing as described.

The vote was unanimous in favor of support of Meadowbrook Civic League's position.

MEADOWBROOK CIVIC LEAGUE

(attached to this cover letter to the CM is an entire packet contained in the records) Dear Mr. Jones, After meeting with each of the three development companies and then listening to their presentations at the meeting coordinated by the City on February 19, the Meadowbrook Civic League (MCL) cannot support any of these proposals for the Meadowbrook School in their current forms. All three fail to meet our request that a minimum of 1.5 acres of the space be retained as public park/open space, and that the density of any development be limited to single-family housing zoned R-5, in keeping with the majority of existing homes in Meadowbrook. We have concerns about the safety implications of increased traffic flow on our narrow streets that would be caused by the curb cuts, directing ingress and egress onto Trouville and Shirland Avenues. In addition, we feel all the developers would likely have a negative long-term impact on surrounding home values. Our residents are already offering significant concessions through our willingness to accommodate the relocation of Fire Station #12 to the site (thereby saving the City the time and expense of acquiring another suitable location), and our willingness to consider appropriately designed and zoned single-family residential development on 1.5 acres of the site. We simply ask the City honor its 2012 recreation master plan that states, "...because the city is already built-out, there are few opportunities to acquire large tracts of park space. It is essential then that the existing parks spaces are upgraded to deliver maximum community benefit. In the few neighborhoods that currently lack a neighborhood park space, strategic investments should be made to provide access to meaningful open space...".

The City already includes the Meadowbrook School in its inventory of public parks, so a major reduction of green space on the site would be a significant blow to Norfolk's already deficient quantity of publicly accessible open space and green canopy. Our surrounding civic leagues in North Meadowbrook, Riverfront, Algonquin Park and Lockhaven have all endorsed the attached MCL position regarding the school site, along with civic leagues from Wards Corner, Suburban Acres, Oakdale Farms/Denby Park and Talbot Park. In addition, the attached online petition contains almost 400 signatures from residents throughout Norfolk supporting the MCL position.

We welcome the opportunity to see if one of the current developers is able to adapt their proposal in order to meet our needs, or if the City will determine there is another approach that would better accomplish the vision of both the City's master plan and of the many Norfolk residents who want to maintain a sizable park and minimize development density on the site. Regards, Kim Himstreet, President, Meadowbrook Civic League

RIVERFRONT CIVIC LEAGUE

Gentlemen: The Riverfront Civic League does not find any of the three proposals presented on February 19, 2014, to be acceptable. The city needs to move the fire station on to the site and leave the rest of the space as a park. Mike Aherron, Area Forrester, Commonwealth of Virginia, spoke to our civic league about green space for Urban Canopy. He said the City of Norfolk is currently attempting to increase its urban canopy. The current value of 33% is well below the recommended coverage for cities east of the Mississippi, which is 40%. To reach these goal new seedlings should be planted and existing trees need to be cared for properly. The Meadowbrook site would be a choice setting in meeting two goals, as a site for more trees and letting the neighborhoods have their parks. Sincerely, Dorma Hendrick, President, Riverfront Civic League.

SUBURBAN ACRES CIVIC LEAGUE

Dear Mayor Fraim and City Council,

We applaud Council's efforts to return surplus and underused school property such as J.E.B. Stuart, Ballentine, Meadowbrook, and Tucker Elementary Schools to a more productive use, and the tax rolls. We are disappointed, however, with the city manager's tactics in implementing council's direction.

A key step on the 'checklist' or package a private developer submits to the planning commission with requests for re-zoning, change of use, new construction, etc. is evidence the developer has socialized the plans with adjoining civic leagues and made efforts to accommodate any concerns expressed by the leagues.

It is incredibly disappointing that city staff would issue an open-ended request for proposals (RFP) for site redevelopment without having a conversation with surrounding neighborhoods on the community's vision, ideas, and preferences.

We now have a situation in which developers, in good faith, have invested time and money in proposals that are unacceptable to the surrounding neighborhoods. A pre-RFP conversation with the neighborhood would have allowed the community to articulate its needs, vision, and ideas so city staff could establish parameters within which developers could craft suitable proposals.

The Suburban Acres Civic League supports preserving and reutilizing historic and other unique or notable structures and property whenever feasible; increasing (or at least maintaining) green space and tree canopy in our urban landscape; requiring commercial and residential density compatible with and complimentary to surrounding neighborhoods in the interest of aesthetics, demand on city services, and values of nearby properties; and ensuring quality of life is a key consideration in any residential redevelopment.

These goals can be met only by starting with that community conversation: an analysis of the existing neighborhood, including its input on neighborhood needs and development potentials that are compatible and acceptable to the community. It seems intuitive that the city's goal of "building better neighborhoods" would be more easily attained with the buy-in and participation of the citizens inhabiting those neighborhoods.

Norfolk is blessed with many neighborhoods made up of involved citizens and vigorous city supporters. The residents of Meadowbrook have invested their time, money, families, and lives in their neighborhood and the city; Meadowbrook School belongs to them, and the rest of us. The Suburban Acres Civic League supports the citizens of the Meadowbrook neighborhood. We urge council to abandon this flawed process and start fresh, beginning with the community conversation, establishing redevelopment parameters specific to the four unique neighborhoods in question, and seeking new, more compatible proposals.

Sincerely,

J. Kevin Janney

President, Suburban Acres Civic League