



Brainstorming the Barns

Creating a Community Vision for the Barns and Surrounding Property

www.brainstormingthebarns.org

Meeting Summary – February 15, 2007

This summary compiles the results of the second public input session of *Brainstorming the Barns: Creating a Community Vision for the Barns and Surrounding Property*, sponsored by the City of Traverse City – Charter Township of Garfield Recreational Authority. Approximately 50 community members participated in the meeting.

Session Structure

The purpose of the second session was to begin to identify areas where each of the four use themes might most appropriately fit in the opinion of the participants.

The first session resulted in a number of ideas for use, but perhaps most important, development principles that may apply to any use where identified and agreed upon by the group, as well as the formation of what are being called use themes. These use themes are general categories where each of the ideas expressed so far seem to fit, including:

- Agriculture
- Arts
- Community
- Recreation

Development Principles: During the course of small group discussion and various potential uses for the Barns and surrounding property at the first meeting, ideas of how the property should be developed and used evolved and were agreed upon by the participants to help guide and provide a framework for the specific use proposals.

These development principles include:

- **Mixed Use:** With the amount of space and buildings available on the site, there is ample opportunity for broad and diverse uses with synergy between groups and activities.
- **Minimize Disruption:** The integrity, natural features, and topography of the property should be maintained. This includes accommodations for people and mobility by utilizing existing parking areas on or near the property, shuttles, “green” parking areas, and generally ensuring that increase the use of the site does not mean dramatically increasing the impervious surface or widespread land balancing on the property.
- **Developed and Open Areas:** Focus higher intensity uses in the area of the current buildings and preserving the open space and natural features of the site.
- **Connections:** Provide physical and activity-based linkages to adjacent property and their uses, including the Village at Grand Traverse Commons, TBAISD, Copper Ridge, West Junior High School and the proposed new YMCA facility.
- **History:** Respect the historical significance of the site and property, not just the buildings as historical structures, but the use of the property as a self-sufficient farm for the former State Hospital.
- **Sustainability:** Improvements to the buildings and operations of the site should utilize sustainable technologies, including green building materials, alternative energy, and waste minimization.

The meeting began with an overview of the visioning process and information on the Barns and surrounding property, including some additional detail on the buildings, as well as the results of the first meeting. The participants in the second meeting were asked to comment on the use themes, development principles, and ideas and agreed with the results of the first meeting, with some comments provided below.

After the presentation, participants formed seven small groups of 8 -10 people to how the Barns and property might best be used. Volunteer facilitators, one for each small group, assisted in the discussion and ensured that all participants had the chance to be heard and understood. Large maps of the site and building footprints were provided for each group to record their ideas. The specific task for the small groups was to begin the process of

allocating space for each of the four themes, based on the development principle of mixed use.

After about an hour and fifteen minutes of lively small group discussion, the facilitators met during a 15 minute break to compile the small group discussion results. The results of that discussion were shared with the full group to make sure that the themes and ideas were adequately and accurately compiled.

Results

The initial presentation of information shared the results of the first session, held on January 18, which included the development principles and use themes, as well as the specific ideas for activities on the Barns and property. The participants in the second meeting were asked if the summary was accurate reflection of the meeting (for those who attended) and if there were other thoughts and ideas.

The following comments were provided:

- Concern was expressed about the usability of the outbuildings and the efficacy of investing in those buildings.
- The comment was made that one of the givens should have referred to the protection of open space, since the millage vote, the District Plan principles and guidelines and the Recreation Authority act are all focused on open space and recreation.
- Additional comments were made regarding consistency with and connection to adjacent properties, including the Garfield Township Park property to the northwest. Concerns were raised over the use of mountain bikes and the impact they have on the Park. There was an interest in the forest management plan and Ben Purdy, Grand Traverse Conservation District commented that a park management plan has been established and available by contacting the District or Garfield Township.
- There are a series of development principles that were developed as part of the District Plan and should be shared with participants and interested persons.

- A question was asked regarding the impervious surface requirements of the District Plan. The application of the calculations has proven very difficult and the requirement is not currently being implemented.
- Building 222 is the only outbuilding with historical significance and should be referred to as the “Horse Barn” rather than the more recent moniker, Tractor Garage.
- The cost for addressing the outbuildings should also include the cost of demolition, which is an economic factor in their fate.

At the conclusion of this discussion, the participants concurred with the results of the first meeting, including the development principles, use themes, and activity ideas.

The task of the small groups were to begin to identify areas or zones on the property where the four use themes (agriculture, arts, community, and recreation) could fit, given the strong agreement on a mixed use approach for the Barns and the property.

The small group discussion resulted in areas of agreement, unresolved issues, and additional opportunities.

Agreement: The following areas represented agreement among the small groups and was also agreed by the large group.

- The cathedral barns is best used for community space, with the opportunity for a variety of groups and events;
- The original barn is also appropriate for community use, perhaps with a focus on agricultural uses’
- There should be space for community gardens on the site; and
- There should be ample space for a variety of use within the buildings on the property

Unresolved Issues: There were some unresolved issues that evolved during the small group discussion. These unresolved issues include:

- There is not agreement on the fate of the outbuildings on the site. Some individuals felt that for a relatively small amount of money, the buildings could be useable for a

variety of purposes. Others believe that they are not worth keeping, and/or that other buildings would be offer a more effective utilization of the property.

- There is a fundamental difference in approach as to build or not to build. There were participants at the meeting who believe that a new building would be appropriate for the site, and others that believe the property should essentially remain in its current state with existing buildings and open space.
- There are two major proposals that have been developed by interested parties: 1) Performing Arts Center and 2) Botanical Gardens.
 - Performing Arts Center: A Performing Arts Center, entitled the Grand Traverse Center (GTC), has been proposed by a group of interested person for location on the Barns Property. The group is requesting 11 acres to construct a 1,100 to 1,500 seat performing art center as well as a band shell.
 - Botanical Gardens: The Botanical Garden Society of Northwestern Michigan is interested in using the Barns property for a proposed botanical garden. The level of unresolved issue related directly to the scope and scale of the botanical garden. If the proposed use includes an area or series of areas throughout the property with developed interpretive gardens, such use may be consistent with those who desire open space. A conservatory or other large building, or a significant area of the property dedicated to the botanical gardens, may not be consistent with open space advocates.

The GTC and Botanical Garden have agreed to join forces and pool their talents, according to information provided by GTC representatives for consideration of developing on the Barns property.

The western portion of the Barns property was proposed as a potential site for the GTC, which is also a significant portion of the open space on the property.

The proposed GTC and a more extensive botanical garden conflicting with open space is a major unresolved issue for the Barns Property.

Opportunities: There were also some additional or expanded opportunities identified in the small group discussion, including:

- Shared, coordinated and pervious parking will all the property users;
- Small organic farming throughout the site with a number of small parcels;
- Utilizing existing footprints for buildings, whether renovated or new;
- Creating a green buffer along Silver Lake Road as a signature for the use of the property and as buffer of the property toward the road;
- Use charges for parking or the buildings to support the cost of the property; and
- Emphasize opportunity for outdoor amphitheater.

Next Session: Thursday, March 15, 2007, 6:30 p.m., West Junior High School