

3rd Chlor-Alkali Site Reuse Planning Committee Meeting

Androscoggin Valley Hospital

59 Page Hill Rd., Berlin, NH

April 29, 2008

5:30-8:00 PM

Meeting Overview

The 3rd Chlor-Alkali Reuse Planning Committee meeting, held at Androscoggin Valley Hospital on April 29th, focused on the following activities:

- Evaluation of reuse ideas for the Chlor-Alkali site
- Identification of preferred future land uses for the site
- Diagramming and mapping preferred future uses and reuse considerations

Below is a list of attendees and summary of the key discussion points from the meeting.

Attendees

Ernie Allain, Berlin Department of Public Works

Terry Block, Resident

Jack Crisp, North American Dismantling

Fran Cusson, Berlin Planning Commission

Rick Cusson, Public Service of New Hampshire

Don Mercier, Brookfield Power

Mike Galuszka, Androscoggin River Watershed Council

Pam Laflamme, Berlin City Planning

Dick Lafleur, Berlin City Council

Laura Viger, Berlin Health Department

Andrew Hoffman, NH DES

Darryl Luce, EPA Region 1

Richard Pease, NH DES

John Podgurski, EPA Region 1

Michael Hancox, E² Inc.

Matt Robbie, E² Inc.

Johnny Zimmerman-Ward, E² Inc.

Land Use Suitability Evaluation Exercise

Discussion of the Draft Land Use Suitability Matrix

- RPC members had concerns that the results of the visioning session are not representative of the community; community goals seemed skewed towards recreation.
- Ms. Laflamme reassured the RPC that the community goals were common themes of the visioning session and participants represented the community as best as possible.
- RPC members indicated community arts could be an additional community goal.
- RPC members reiterated that job creation is becoming increasingly important.
- The RPC generally agreed with the matrix and suggested no changes to the suitability designations.

Individual Land Use Voting Results

Members of the committee were asked to indicate their individual land use preferences for the site; individuals were given six colored dots, four dots were to be used to indicate the four most preferred uses, and two dots to indicate their least preferred uses.

The results of the individual voting by general land use type were as follows:

Industrial: 5 (most preferred), 6 (least preferred)
Commercial: 9 (most preferred)
Residential: 7 (least preferred)
Office: 2 (most preferred)
Community Facilities: 5 (most preferred)
Recreation Space: 1 (most preferred)
Heritage Corridor: 4 (most preferred)
Trails: 4 (most preferred)
River Access: 5 (most preferred), 4 (least preferred)

Land Use Evaluation Findings Summary:

- Committee members indicated strong support for commercial uses, community facilities, trails, and a heritage corridor.
- Participants were unanimously opposed to residential land uses being located at the site in the future.
- The committee's support for industrial land uses and enhanced river access varied. A slight majority opposed industrial uses (6 opposed; 5 in favor). A slight majority supported river access (5 in favor; 4 opposed)

A discussion of appropriate uses for the site continued during the mapping workshop portion of the meeting.

Mapping Workshop and Discussion of Appropriate Uses for the Site

- Berlin's recreation budget has been cut and the tax base is small; several members of the committee questioned whether a municipal recreation center is appropriate for the Site.
- A multiuse area, including a pool, shopping, coffee, adult fitness center, trails, etc. could contribute more to the economics of the area than a single use such as a baseball field, which already exist nearby and in other parts of the town.
- RPC members indicated that a recreation area for children is important.
- The Site could be used to attract private entities that could provide community-oriented services.
- Recreational uses beyond what the town has to offer should be considered, such as golf, karate, etc.
- Cultural richness of the area should be utilized.
- Land uses that are flexible and adaptable over the long-term are best suited to the site. Uses at the site will need to be able to adapt to both changing community needs and the future redevelopment of adjacent properties.
- The Committee agreed that future uses at the Site should ultimately support and compliment the surrounding land uses.
- Ideas for Flexible Commercial Uses
 - Recreational uses run by private entities could support community goals without over-burdening municipal resources.
 - Cultural and art-oriented uses could bring people into the community, and compliment the downtown.
 - An outdoor recreation store could support the local economy, and build on the City's scenic and recreational resources.
 - An artisan shop focused on pottery-making, or woodworking could compliment the City's heritage, attract visitors who would also spend money and support the Downtown, contributing broadly to the local economy.
 - The group considered whether a parking lot integrated with a pedestrian trail system would be suitable for the site. Several agreed that this would be a flexible use that could benefit commercial uses on surrounding properties.
- Site Access - the group discussed the opportunities and challenges for vehicular access at the site. Currently, the 4.9-acre site is benefited with a right-to-pass over the northern 60-acre North American Dismantling parcel. Future improvements to this 50'-wide strip of land would need to be coordinated with North American or future owners of this 60-acre parcel.
- Trails – the group mapped out a pedestrian and multi-use trail that connects the Site to Downtown through the Fraser properties on the western bank of the river, the Northern Forest Heritage Park, Bridge Street pedestrian bridge, and the 12th St. Bridge.

- River access was considered, but there is no river access from the site to the northern, flat water. There are also 2 other boat landings nearby.
- Visual access to the river was also discussed. One participant pointed out that the Sawmill Dam may obstruct views to the northern flat water stretches of the river.
- The group briefly discussed the types of skills that Berlin's workforce has to offer. Participants agreed that the community has many workers trained in technical trades. Additionally, Berlin's New Hampshire's Community College Campus is set up to provide flexible and adaptable employment training opportunities that could be tailored to the needs of individual employers.
- The community also has valuable assets close by such as the Androscoggin Valley Hospital, historic grand hotels, and skiing.

Mapping Workshop Findings Summary

Overall the committee emphasized the importance of establishing flexible uses at the site that could compliment the surrounding properties, and provide access to a multi-use trail system.

Small-scale manufacturing uses that leverage the technical trade skills of the workforce could provide job opportunities as well as an attractive amenity for neighborhood residents and visitors to the community.

Next Steps

The consultant team will develop a reuse framework map that summarizes the committee's future land use recommendations for the Chlor-Alkali site based on the discussions, land use suitability evaluation process, and mapping exercise summarized above.

The fourth and final Chlor-Alkali RPC meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 2, 2008 (location TBD). The at this meeting, RPC members will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the draft reuse framework map and discuss the steps that would be needed to implement the elements of the site's reuse framework. Following this meeting, the consultant team will compile a draft final report that summarizes the reuse planning process and presents the site's reuse framework.