

*Fort Valley, Georgia:
Woolfolk Chemical Works Superfund Site Reuse Planning Project
Meeting Summary*

**Woolfolk Alliance / Reuse Planning Group
Fort Valley City Hall
Tuesday, August 8, 2006**

I. Meeting Purpose and Reuse Planning Project Overview

The following document summarizes the Woolfolk Alliance's August meeting, which was the first in a series of meetings focused on developing a reuse planning strategy for the Woolfolk Chemical Works Superfund site.

To start the meeting, Fort Valley Mayor John Stumbo welcomed the Woolfolk Alliance participants to the meeting and explained that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has provided the City of Fort Valley with a grant to undertake a community-based future land use planning project for the Woolfolk Chemical Works site (Woolfolk site) and develop future land use recommendations for the 31-acre central portion of the site.

Project consultant team member Matt Robbie gave an overview of the reuse planning project. Mr. Robbie explained that the purpose of the project is two-fold. First, the project offers the community an opportunity to come together and build on existing knowledge of the Woolfolk site, discuss community preferences and priorities for the area's mix of potential future uses, and develop a site reuse report that can inform the community's future plans and priorities. The second goal of the project is for the community to provide EPA and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA EPD) with the community's guidance and anticipated goals for the reuse of the area. While the two regulatory agencies' primary responsibilities are to protect human health and environment, EPA must also consider reasonably anticipated future land uses for the Woolfolk site. The community-based planning process hosted by the Woolfolk Alliance will provide EPA and GA EPD with the community's preferences and priorities for future land uses at the Woolfolk site.

Introduction to the Woolfolk Reuse Planning Committee

Woolfolk Alliance members and community stakeholders, in addition to representatives from state and federal agencies and the project's consultant team, attended the project's first reuse planning meeting. The Woolfolk Alliance and additional participants will serve as an advisory body called the *Woolfolk Reuse Planning Committee* (Committee) that will manage the Woolfolk site reuse planning project. The Committee will meet three times over a six-month period and host a public meeting to share its draft findings with the larger Fort Valley community for review and feedback.

Committee members include:

- Fort Valley residents
- City of Fort Valley staff and elected officials
- Local business owners
- Property owners at the Woolfolk site
- Local real estate and economic development representatives
- Fort Valley State University representatives
- Local civic and community organization representatives, including the Woolfolk Citizens' Response Group, Fort Valley's Housing Task Force, Downtown Development Authority, and Downtown Merchant's Association
- Representatives from local churches

Introduction to Project Resource Members and the Project's Consultant Team

Project consultant team member Matt Robbie clarified that residents and community members will participate as decision-making members of the Committee, while federal and state agency representatives will serve as resource members to the Committee. Resource members will be available to provide information to inform the Committee's recommendations but will not be involved in the project's decision-making.

Mr. Robbie also introduced the project's consultant team. E² Inc. is an environmental consulting company based in Charlottesville, Virginia that specializes in helping communities undertake future land use planning processes for environmentally impaired areas. The consultant team has worked with more than 50 communities across the country over the past four years on these projects. In Fort Valley, the project's consultant team will be providing research and analysis services, developing a conceptual site reuse strategy based on the Committee's discussions, organizing the project's public outreach effort, facilitating Committee meetings, and serving as a liaison among the Woolfolk Alliance, the community's reuse planning participants, and EPA and GA EPD.

Mr. Robbie indicated that the team's role is to support the Committee, not to make decisions about future land uses at the Woolfolk site. The team will assist the Committee in identifying issues, gathering information, assessing options, seeking community input, and offering recommendations to the Committee. The project's consultant team also does not represent EPA or GA EPD.

Committee Member Roles, Project Ground Rules, and Project Decision-Making

Consultant team member Matt Robbie reviewed potential Committee member roles for the project and solicited committee feedback and additions. These roles will include:

- Listening to the local community throughout the process and incorporating their perspectives into the Committee's discussions

- Learning - about fellow Committee members' interests, the Woolfolk site's characteristics, and future land use opportunities and challenges at the site
- Identifying and evaluating future land use options for the Woolfolk site and providing the City of Fort Valley, EPA, and GA EPD with future land use recommendation(s)
- Serving as local ambassadors and information resources for the community

Committee members did not identify any additional roles.

Mr. Robbie acknowledged that the Alliance had clearly established a format and environment for discussions that is respectful of all its participants. He provided a list of potential project ground rules that reflect the established environment and solicited Committee feedback and additions. The Committee will be able to update these ground rules throughout the process:

- Committee discussions should be an open, friendly process where different opinions are welcome and respected.
- Clear, understandable language should be used in Committee discussions. Any time that an acronym is used, it should be explained.
- The project should be an interactive process that reaches into the community to provide information and to receive input.

Committee members did not identify any additional project ground rules.

The Committee also discussed project decision-making. The Woolfolk Site Reuse Planning Project has been created as a consensus-based process, with Committee members working to reach shared recommendations regarding future land use opportunities at the Woolfolk site. If full Committee agreement is not possible, an accurate description of group preferences, along with the pros and cons of various options and areas of agreement and disagreement, will be reported to the City of Fort Valley, the Woolfolk Alliance, EPA, and GA EPD.

II. Woolfolk Site Status Update

Project resource member Charles King provided a status update on remedial activities at the site. He clarified that current remedial activities at the site include sealing the soil containment cell with a synthetic membrane, capping the cell, and following up on yard sampling in the site's fourth Operable Unit.

III. Woolfolk Site and Land Use Analysis

Project consultant team members Bess Wellborn and Matt Robbie provided a summary analysis of the central portion of the Woolfolk site highlighting the site's zoning and existing land uses, including commercial, civic, and residential uses, as well as other key characteristics including property ownership patterns, remediation plans, and access considerations. The information included in the consultant team's presentation is available in the Land Use Committee information packet that was distributed prior to the meeting, as well as in the August 8th Meeting Presentation posted on the project's website (www.communityplan.net/woolfolk.htm). Please contact Mr. Robbie at mrobbie@e2inc.com or (434) 975-6700 ext. 227 for paper copies of the information packet or presentation.

IV. Committee Discussion

Following a lunch break, the Committee regrouped for a discussion of potential land use opportunities for the Woolfolk site. Below is a summary of the Committee's discussion organized into categories corresponding to different land uses and other site-related issues.

General Land Use Issues

- Several participants expressed an interest in revenue-generating land uses and uses that could help create jobs for Fort Valley's residents.
- Participants also suggested that future uses at the Woolfolk site should provide learning and research opportunities for Fort Valley University students as well as the public at large. The development of exhibits or research projects that explain the site's contamination and remediation was one approach discussed by the Committee.

Recreational Land Uses

- The Committee showed limited interest in outdoor recreational reuse at the Woolfolk site.
- Several participants mentioned concerns about children playing in a recreation area at the Woolfolk site. Participants cited the potential for children's exposure to contaminated soils through ingestion as the primary issue. Project resource members clarified that contaminated material at the site, including soils, are being treated and consolidated within underground storage cells. However, many participants are concerned that the site's contamination is not fully characterized, and that for that reason recreational uses should not be considered as a future use of the site.
- One participant suggested that recreational uses requiring impervious surfaces (e.g. asphalt basketball or tennis courts) could be more acceptable or viable future uses.

Commercial Land Uses

- Participants discussed a range of revenue-generating uses for the Woolfolk site; recognizing that existing industrial parks in Peach County have capacity to accommodate new industrial and warehousing uses, the Committee focused on a range of commercial future land uses.
- Committee members suggested that an open-air farmers market, like the Forest Park's farmers market (<http://forestparkga.org/>), could provide a flexible market place for local farmers, growers, crafts people, and entrepreneurs. Participants discussed the current farmers market organized by the Fort Valley Downtown Merchant's Association, and suggested that a permanent venue for the farmers market could help to increase its visibility and turnout.

The Committee also acknowledged that a farmers market could provide fresh produce and consumer goods for residents in surrounding neighborhoods.

- Participants also discussed professional offices as a potential future land use at the Woolfolk site. Committee members mentioned a call center that could support an existing business with communication services. Committee members expressed an interest in developing a job training partnership with Fort Valley State University that would focus around a call center or other information, technology, and communications services.
- Committee members identified indoor recreation / entertainment uses as an alternative commercial use for the site. Participants mentioned a bowling alley and roller-skating rink as two possible ideas. Several participants liked the idea of providing local activities for both youths and adults.
- Several participants noted that a multi-use stadium could be another way to draw people to the site and potentially generate revenue through event ticket sales and refreshments. Other participants expressed a strong interest in indoor recreational uses.

Community Land Uses

- Committee members discussed the need for expanded public transportation in and around Fort Valley. One concept discussed at the meeting featured a peach-themed bus for residents and university students that would provide transportation from Fort Valley to existing shopping and commercial destinations like Warner Robbins. Some participants cautioned against the of providing public transportation to take people away from Fort Valley and suggested that local transportation services would be valuable for the community.
- One participant pointed out that old machinery stored in a vacant lot adjacent to Anthoine's Machine Works could be incorporated into a public sculpture garden. The company is the oldest operating business in Fort Valley, and a public garden incorporating machinery could be one way to recognize the enterprise's contribution to the local economy.

Residential Land Uses

- Committee members expressed limited to no interest in residential land uses at the site. Participants pointed out that residential uses would generate less tax revenues and that the legacy of the site's contamination would likely make the area unattractive for residential property.
- Participants discussed concerns about contamination at existing residential properties in neighborhoods surrounding the site. One member suggested that a buffer could be established to protect residents from activities at the site. Many participants felt that future uses at the site should compliment surrounding neighborhoods and improve quality of life for existing residents.
- Committee members asked if EPA could provide additional assurance that contamination issues in residential areas have been or are being addressed. The Committee discussed the idea of EPA providing devices such as HEPA air filters, and custom water filters in surrounding residential areas. Agency officials explained that monitoring reports show that Fort Valley's drinking water and air quality both comply with public health standards.

Municipal Land Uses

- The Committee talked about developing a municipal services center on portions of the site that would be accessible to the Peach County Library on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Several members of the Committee liked the idea of establishing a municipal plaza housing municipal activities such as the City's administrative offices, police station, fire station, and public utility commission.

- Participants suggested that a municipal complex would help instill confidence in area residents, visitors, and current and potential business owners that the site is safe.
- Current site owners have indicated a willingness to transfer vacant portions of the site to Fort Valley for \$1. Under such an arrangement, the City of Fort could acquire land for municipal office expansion in Downtown Fort Valley at no cost.

General Site Stigma Issues

- Several participants voiced a concern that the Woolfolk site's legacy of contamination might have negative effects on the community's image. One participant cited a concern that stigma surrounding the site's contamination had affected decision-making on the part of potential residents, university students, and business owners.

Groundwater Treatment System Issues

- There were several concerns raised about the ongoing remediation and investigation of a groundwater plume at the site. The reuse framework for the site may need to consider future ground water remedial structures (e.g., monitoring wells and pump and treat lines may need to be installed in various places in and around the site). The ground water treatment station is located at the southern edge of the site, adjacent to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

V. Next Steps

The next Woolfolk Site Reuse Planning Committee meeting, which will take place in City Council Chambers at Fort Valley City Hall at 205 West Church Street, will be held on December 12th, 2006 from 10-2 pm.

The project's second Committee meeting will be a workshop-style discussion. During the meeting, Committee members will have a chance to review and discuss several conceptual future land use approaches for Woolfolk site developed by the project's consultant team that reflect the Committee's discussions to date.

If Committee members have any project-related questions, please contact project consultant team member Matt Robbie at (434) 975-6700 ext. 227 / mrobbie@e2inc.com.