

Developers Meeting for Tompkins County RFP - 8/27/2012

Q&A

1. What was the methodology used for determining the proposed density for this project? The area defined in the shaded portion of the map as Potential Development Area is approximately 8 acres in size. The 70 units proposed for this project were calculated within this area to reach a density of approximately 10 units per acre.

The Potential Development Area was determined based on the portion of the property that was determined to be most appropriate for development, offering a significant buffer for the Indian Creek Road community and ensuring that the small Federally- designated wetland on the property is not encroached on.

2. Is there potential for a second access point to property, other than the one indicated on Harris B. Dates Drive?

The only identified entry is off Harris B. Dates Drive. Proposals may look at possible options for access via DuBois or Indian Creek Roads, though they are not likely to be palatable to the community, and we are seeking to reduce community concerns related to traffic issues.

3. Is it imagined that the buffer of Indian Creek Road must retain the area in “as is” natural state or would community amenities be appropriate?

There is flexibility for open space or development of community amenities. For example, trails or community gardens might be uses that would be appropriate in that area. It is anticipated that a natural buffer of reasonable depth will be maintained along Indian Creek Road.

4. How will this project relate to the Black Diamond Trail?

The Black Diamond Trail is a new cross-municipal multi-use trail that will connect Cass Park and Allen Treman State Park in the City of Ithaca to Taughannock State Park in the Town of Ulysses. It is currently under construction and is located just beyond the project scope area. The distance between the trail and the project area is about 0.5 miles. The Town of Ithaca and Cayuga Medical Center are interested in creating a connection to the trail in the vicinity of the project area. As stated in the RFP, points are offered for applications that include a trail connection within the project proposal.

5. How is the pedestrian link to transit expected to be integrated into proposals?

A pedestrian link to local transit (TCAT bus), which circulates to and from the Cayuga Medical Center, is imagined to be along Harris B. Dates Drive. Cayuga Medical Center has stated that it may be amenable to host a pedestrian link on its side of street but the Medical Center is not interested in being charged with maintenance responsibility. Developers will need to reach out to TCAT to confirm route data and any needed specs to coordinate proposals.

6. What is the status of infrastructure, specifically sewer and water capacity for the site?

The countywide Tompkins County Council of Governments infrastructure study that was completed two years ago shows that there is sewer and water capacity available to this site. The link to the study is <http://www.tcad.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/CompleteWSReport3-10.pdf>

*Exact siting of any utilities should be coordinated with individual utility entities.

7. In the history of the property, has there been any question about locating a potential pump station for the site?

No. In fact a few years ago, the County completed an analysis for potential construction of a new County Health Department building here, and that issue was not raised.

8. How does the EPA Climate Showcase Community fit together with this project?

The Climate Showcase Community award for Tompkins County includes three demonstrations of how to apply the principles of increased energy efficiency in new housing developments in different settings. The first project at EcoVillage is the development of the community's third phase of housing that will be built to the Passive House energy standard. The next project is the Aurora Street Pocket Neighborhood that is creating new housing units in downtown Ithaca using value engineering to achieve approximately 80% greater energy savings than current code requires. The County Project is the last demonstration project of the EPA Climate Showcase Community work. This project is seeking to integrate energy efficiency principles and other features outlined in the RFP into a mainstream, private development model to show how this could be replicated in typical housing development.

9. Are the construction/energy specifications for the first 2 demonstration projects available on line?

Not at present, but some could be posted, such as building sections that would be most useful to potential developers of this site. Developers should contact Sue Cozentini (APN) (607-327-1081) or Liz Walker (EcoVillage) (607- 272-5149) for further information on construction methods in those projects.

10. Are there marketing funds available for this project?

There are not funds specifically earmarked for this project, though for the next year an intensive outreach/education process is planned (including a website that this project could certainly post to) that would feature the progress of the three Climate Showcase Community demonstration projects, explain the goals of each, and track their energy savings once constructed and inhabited.

11. If the first 2 projects receive excess interest, is it possible to capture information from individuals who might be interested in housing being developed on the County site?

Currently, it is not envisioned that this will be the case. However, individuals who have been interested in EcoVillage and Aurora Pocket Neighborhood will almost certainly become aware of this project.

12. What are the anticipated prices for the first two demonstration developments?

EcoVillage: \$86,000 for a studio – \$253,000 for a 4-bedroom house. This includes all of the common costs, such as the Common House (with 5,000sf of common amenities, guest rooms, laundry, kitchen and dining room, sitting room, kids' play space, yoga/multi-purpose room), and outdoor features including ponds, gardens, etc. It does include LEED Gold, Energy Star, and most likely Passive House certification. It does not include solar photovoltaics that are being installed at the site.

Aurora St Pocket Neighborhood: 1,550sf: 3 bedrooms and a study, 3 baths, (with a master suite), front and rear covered porches. \$310,000 (\$200/sf).

1,350sf: 3 bedrooms, 1.5 baths, covered front porch, \$230,000 (\$170/sf).

These prices include land cost, design, all soft costs, common space landscaping, full basements, triple glazed windows, hardwood and tile floors. Due to air source heat pump system, the houses will have air conditioning as well.

It is anticipated that the houses will be LEED Gold and Energy Star certified.

13. Is there any delayed taxation associated with any projects in Climate Showcase Community Projects?

No.

14. For the 14 units proposed in the RFP for development that are below AMI, is Tompkins County proposing any tax consideration for subsidy?

There is no new or additional funding proposed beyond existing funding mechanisms, such as the Housing Fund, which is identified in the RFP.

15. The purchase price of \$500K is essentially just for land costs?

Yes.

16. How was this purchase price determined?

The County Assessment Department was consulted and determined that based on the number of units and use proposed, \$500K was a fair value.

17. Is the tax assessment of the property expected to be based on the fact that about 1/3 of the land is proposed for development while 2/3 will remain undeveloped?

The final assessment of the property will depend entirely on the final project as constructed. Issues such as number of units for sale vs. rental will affect assessed value. However, the County is selling or leasing the whole parcel as one property, regardless of future assessed valuation.

18. Are there any environmental reports available for the property?

No, it has been vacant for a long time and may, in fact, never have been developed.

19. Are there any market studies available?

There is a recent multi-family market study completed for the County available on the County Planning Department website at http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/documents/ApartmentAnalysisithacatompkinscountynyd1104final_8_2012_000.pdf

This study suggests a fairly strong demand for housing over next 5 years. The study considered incomes in various Tompkins County market segments.

20. What would the expected unit costs be for affordable models?

Proposals should show how they propose to meet the goal for units affordable to households at 80% AMI such that no more than 30% of household income is being spent on housing. This would be based on current conditions, such as interest rates and taxes. We are open to a range of costs within the neighborhood. Ideally, a mix of incomes would be accommodated, as outlined in the RFP. Also, the mix of incomes should be distributed geographically throughout the neighborhood.

21. Would phasing of development be permitted?

As stated in the RFP, the payment method allows ½ of the payment of the purchase price to be paid over time as units are developed and sold. However, there will be an end date when the entire remaining balance will come due as state in the RFP. It would be expected that housing would be developed as quickly as the market will allow.

22. Is data for demand coming from EcoVillage?

No. EcoVillage is a unique co-housing model based on developing an intentional community. No specific community model is being preconceived for this project.

23. Isn't it true that one of the drawbacks of a project like this is exemplified in the fact that no private developers stepped forward to develop this third phase at EcoVillage?

No. The EcoVillage approach for development from the beginning was to design the new phase internally, as a plan for the community by the community.

For this new housing demonstration project area, the only replication of the EcoVillage model are the energy efficiency and environmental features, the spatial relationship of housing to open space, and the incorporation of common amenities. The Aurora Street project will present a precedent for the benefits of community sharing of facilities and open space in an urban context. We anticipate that the development of this county property to the standards described in the RFP will be very desirable housing for households in Tompkins County. Also, opportunities to purchase housing in the County at similar density and amenities are currently very limited.

24. Is there flexibility for different housing types and are there size limits?

A mix of housing types is desirable, but the size limit for a single structure needs to relate to single-family units in the community. The PNZ provisions specifically provide that in the Village Residential District (the relevant standard here) the following limits apply:

“Apartment buildings consistent with a residential aesthetic and containing less than 10 dwelling units, or 16 single room occupancy units. (6,000 sf maximum footprint, maximum of 4 stories.)

Public Houses (limited to 6,000 sf footprint)

Community services and neighborhood commercial spaces less than 4,000 sf per building, in the absence of a UM district.”

25. Are there any height restrictions for development?

As stated in the RFP regulations document, height of most buildings is expected to be capped at 3 stories.

26. Is water pressure sufficient to provide appropriate utility access in a multi-story building on the site?

Unknown. Developers will need to do due diligence for their particular proposed projects.

27. Is noise or light pollution a factor with the close proximity to Cayuga Medical Center?

The entry for Medical Center Emergency Room is from the signal-controlled Route 96/Harris B. Dates Drive intersection. It is fairly far from this property and would not be expected to impact housing in this area.

28. Is there a plan for the Biggs B Building (located across Harris B. Dates Drive from the project site)?

The building is owned by Cayuga Medical Center and is used for training and classroom space. There is potential to use the building for future medical facilities or develop housing at the site though to our knowledge no firm plans have been developed to date.

29. Has a skilled nursing facility been proposed for the Biggs B building?

No.

30. Has a site assessment been completed for the Biggs B building?

The Biggs B building belongs to CMC and we do not have access to or authority over any assessments they may have done of that building site prior to its acquisition from the County. To the best of our knowledge the County did not conduct a site assessment.

31. Is there remaining known asbestos from the former Biggs B building that was located on the property?

We're not sure what exactly this question referred to. No known building was located on the property being offered through this RFP. The Biggs B building across the road is now owned and occupied by Cayuga Medical Center. The Biggs A building that was owned by Cayuga Medical Center at the time it was demolished was located across the road on property currently owned by the Medical Center and not on the current site.

32. What is the energy source for the Biggs B Building?

Cayuga Medical Center has a thermal energy plant that provides its campus with heat and is currently updating its facilities to Combined Heat and Power (CHP). It is feasible that there could be future expansion of this system to provide district heating for the project site. It is technically feasible to achieve this, but partnership and financial coordination with Cayuga Medical Center would need to be developed.

Contact info for Cayuga Medical Center regarding Combined Heat and Power: Lou LoVecchio, Assistant Vice President, Cayuga Medical Center, 607-274-4302

33. How does the increase in percentage of energy efficiency required in the RFP compare to NYSERDA's 3.0 program or increases in anticipated State energy requirements?

The projected increases did consider the State's future increased energy requirements, but how this relates to NYSERDA's 3.0 program is unknown. It may be helpful to reach out to those working on these issues for the other 2 demonstration projects. EcoVillage is working with Steven Winters Assoc (SWA) and Aurora Street Pocket Neighborhood is working with Olaf Babson for rating building design and performance.

34. How will the scoring system for energy components be completed?

We are looking for developers to propose energy achievement levels, based on construction and manufacturing specifications or previous relevant experiences, then present a plan explaining how they will achieve these levels and measure them over time.

35. Is the sale of this property tied to achievement of results?

Sale of the property is tied to the commitment to achieve energy reduction levels and a satisfactory proposed method of implementing the work that will result in projected measurable energy savings.

36. Is a zoning change going to be required to achieve 10 units /acre on the property?

This area is likely to be rezoned for a Planned Development Zone (PDZ) incorporating the model PNS standards. The County, upon approving a plan for development, would work with the developer to approach the town to rezone as a PDZ.

37. Do you anticipate that the Town of Ithaca will need to adopt the Pedestrian Neighborhood Zone (PNZ)?

A designation for a Planned Development Zone is likely to precede any new comprehensive change to the Town's zoning. Zoning districts are not likely to change until a full zoning review is complete, in coordination with the comprehensive plan adoption timeline.

38. Are the standards and regulations presented in the RFP more of an ideal and not necessarily required?

These standards were developed because they allow the proposed density to be achieved and offer an opportunity to create a highly livable, dense community. Developers are urged to seek to achieve these standards. If deviations are deemed necessary, they should be explained in the proposal.

39. Are townhouses an acceptable housing type?

They can be included but should not be massive in scale (not to exceed 3 shared walls), as in larger numbers of attached units they are not consistent with the fabric of a village

setting we are promoting, where single buildings are in close proximity but are generally distinct. Attached structures could be considered but would require an explanation of the reason they are needed to make other important elements of the proposal meet the standards and criteria, such as attaining affordability.

40. A note that the Town of Ithaca sprinkler laws will be required if more than 2-unit dwellings are proposed.

This requirement is included in the PNZ standards.

41. Is there water pressure sufficient for sprinklers?

Unknown. It is strongly recommended that developers check specifications based on the requirements of their project proposals.

42. How were the density projections calculated?

The density proposed is based strictly on accommodating 70 new housing units on the approximately 8 acres identified in the Potential Development Area. If, for example, a proposal puts forth a higher density in a four-acre area that would be considered, though for this site we are not seeking densities much higher than 10 units/acre. The UM zone in the PNZ would be appropriate in certain locations, but it is not proposed to be applied here.

43. How is Building K (house adjacent to the vacant property) envisioned to be integrated into this project?

Historically, Building K was built as the Director's house for the medical campus. Proposals would have to include separate purchase and proposed use of Building K, as stated in RFP.

44. If developers would like to walk the property prior to submitting proposals, please contact the Planning Department at 607-274-5560, so that we can notify Medical Center and County staff.

45. The RFP presents specific information about offsite parking, but how will that accommodate all potential buyers who may be interested in having their car nearby?

Removing the costs of road infrastructure to each house will help to keep this development more affordable. It is believed that this will be appealing to people and that this is a good concept that preserves and enhances other priority amenities. Within the PNZ model there is identified opportunity for drop off zones near units, though permanent parking would be offsite.

46. Is there any issue associated with the PNZ and fire/emergency access?

The standards in the PNZ considered this carefully and reflect actual experience and lessons learned from the EcoVillage site.

47. Does EcoVillage have sprinklers?

Phase I does not. It is unknown whether Phases II and III of the development do or do not.