

## **Planning Alternatives and Feasibility Findings for Surplus Barracks Properties.**

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**Prepared For: DCD**

**November, 1973 (revised August, 1974)**

### **1.0 Background**

There is a portion of the Northwest Side of the City known as the "Disciplinary Barracks". The United States Government had declared a substantial portion of that site "surplus". This Plan was written to provide options for development of the surplus land on the Disciplinary Barracks.

The Plan examined the impacts on barracks surplus land from possible commercial and retail use, industrial use, housing, public open space and active recreational space

### **2.0 Site Description**

Total of 368 acres bounded on the north by Chicago and North West Railroad, east by Hopkins Street and Sherman Boulevard, south by Silver Spring Drive and West by 55<sup>th</sup> Street Right-of-Way. The area is abundant with weeds and wild grass. There is a heavily wooded section located along western boundary immediately adjacent and south-southwest of the Milwaukee Railroad Line. A portion of land is designated as Flood Plain. Important to note is a non-visible extensive tunnel system connecting former functional areas of the prison complex and farmhouse to the south. Existing zoning for the area is Residential.

### **3.0 Housing Potential**

- 25% of single-family residential listings in impact area surrounding barracks
- Area could support absorption of 200 single-family dwelling units or duplexes 26,000-31,000 inclusive per year.
- Area could absorb 200 units for elderly on the barrack site
- Total number of housing units proposed is 442 out of this number 331 would be single family, 75 single family town homes/condos and 36 apartments. This housing would be absorbed in the market in 3-5 years.

### **4.0 Demographic Factors**

- Majority of area residents are white
- 1% of residents live in group quarters
- Just under 90% of households are families
- 67% of 14 year old and older are married compared to 58% citywide
- Area residents on average are younger than city residents
- Area Median income \$10,966 compared to city median income \$10,262
- 44% blue-collar workers compared to 40% blue-collar workers citywide
- Housing structures ages are newer than city wide housing structures
- 58% are single-family structures compared to 46% citywide
- 60% of homes are owner occupied in area compared to 46% citywide
- Median gross rent in area is \$138, citywide is \$117 per month
- In area, household average is 3.45 persons compared to 2.96 citywide average
- Overall impact area is generally economically healthy

## **5.0 Impediments**

Some impediments of the development process may occur because demolition of the prison structure represents in excess of 10% of improved land value. Also, much of the land is low and reflects a high water table.

## **6.0 Surrounding Land Uses**

To the west of the barracks is a small subdivision of mostly single-family homes. On the west, as well as the north, there is a belt of industrial uses (including some offices). North of the industrial belt are residential uses. Immediately to the south is McGovern Park.

Other uses near the Disciplinary Barracks Land (DBL) include:

- Two family-oriented public housing projects
- There are minor commercial areas that provide convenience goods to the region, with the largest of these areas on Florist Avenue (approximately five blocks from the DBL)
- Major shopping centers are within a 10-minute drive from the DBL site

## **7.0 Transportation**

When this Plan was developed there were east-west routes on Florist Avenue and Silver Spring Drive. There is convenient access to DBL site via surrounding arterial streets.

## **8.0 Community Facilities**

There is a school for each grade level located within close proximity of the DBL site. Schoenecker Park and McGovern Park provide adequate space for open/communal space and organized sports. There are 3 fire stations and police District 4 is located close to the area.

## **9.0 Site Development Considerations**

The long-range goal was the elimination of army activities and subsequent acquisition of remaining army properties. Agencies that would have an immediate impact on any development of the DBL site:

- MATC: Holds title to 62 acres of the site
- Milwaukee County: 25.5 acres must be relinquished for implementation of viable development plan
- Milwaukee County Parks Commission: Responsible for public open space development
- MPS: Can provide additional incentive for homebuyer

## **10.0 Alternatives**

### **Alternative I: Open Space Development**

The objective is to retain as much open space as possible for nature preserve use and provide housing for elderly. All proposed land uses are compatible both internally and with adjacent off-site uses. Open space development would occur in Schoenecker Park, Lincoln Creek and Lagoon, and on a developed Nature Preserve, between the Nature Preserve and McGovern Park. Senior housing would be built on the higher ground of the site and should be of low-rise construction.

### ***Development Problems***

Preliminary options expressed by the Milwaukee County Park Commission indicate that the current disposition of the DBL does not have the physical amenities necessary for a nature preserve development. However, the staff expressed an interest in the DBL as open space for “active” recreational use.

Concern for the development of the “nature preserve” generally rests in three areas:

- The Public Agency Developer – Administrator
- Immediate and continued funding

- Physical development factors

### ***Development Cost***

The public cost total would approximate \$2.8 million. This includes the demolition of existing structures and the creation of the required amenities for a recreational open space/nature preserve.

### ***Benefit/Cost and Revenue/Cost Considerations***

Land for recreational purposes and existing in a natural/semi-natural state is a scarce commodity and the DBL is one of a few plots of land that could provide new amenities to this scale. However, it is estimated to take twenty years before the terrain is capable of establishing a natural foliation. In the interim, much of the land would have to be sufficiently secured to prevent interruptions. In the long run, Alternative I would benefit the community by providing a unique resource, as well as the overall environment. On the other hand, the alternative would be expensive and generate little tax revenue – it is estimated that the rate of return on public costs would be 4.6% annually and it would take 21 years to amortize the public capital costs.

### **Alternative II: Planned Housing Development Concept**

This concept is directed toward the provision of low density housing for area residents near jobs available in the neighboring industries. Developing a total of 640 dwellings units and providing for necessary private and public uses needed to support the residential use. As much open space as possible would be retained for both aesthetic and functional use. Alternative II was designed in regard to natural on-site conditions, land uses and environment surrounding the site. It was developed taking into consideration the open space, green belt, and buffers which include, Schoenecker Park, Northern buffer - combined with the existing elevated railroad embankment, Lincoln Creek and Lagoon, Nature Preserve, Railroad Buffer, Sherman Boulevard Buffer, Parks (an existing intermittent creek and dry pond), and a community yard.

### ***Housing***

All housing units are proposed single-family homes on detached lots. All housing is located on higher ground of the site. Keeping with the expressed local community desires, single-family town homes, housing for the elderly and multi unit housing would be provided.

### ***Supporting Uses***

In addition to residential uses, Alternative II provides for neighborhood services, including an Elementary School, social center, neighborhood shopping, and open space. On-site and off-site traffic and transportation were considered adequate.

### ***Costs***

The total cost of demolition, street improvements and open space amenities comes to \$4,604,559. The Plan also includes additional cost of basic improvements per dwelling unit. Total public costs were estimated at \$5.8 million. This alternative suggests a higher-level of investment would create incentives for existing owners of real estate to undertake maintenance and improvement programs. Other possible impacts would be on public services, fire protection, energy sources, public transportation, streets/sanitation, recreational activities, housing pollution aesthetic value, compatible land use, natural topography and associated physical features, wildlife and floodplains and watersheds. Alternative II is not detrimental to the environment. It is a stabilizing force for community growth of the north side of the city.

### ***Benefit/Cost and Revenue/Cost Considerations***

In the short term, Alternative II provides for 642 new units of housing and would result in \$16.8 million of new investment during a three to five year period. Furthermore, through the development of a range of housing types, this alternative would lend social stability to surrounding neighborhoods and meet current housing demands. While the public cost is much higher, more tax revenue would be generated and the rate of return on public investment would be approximately 15.5% (amortizing the public debt

within 7 years). Finally, the integration of elderly housing and creation of a new school will assist in alleviating pressures within Milwaukee.