

Mayview State Hospital Land Reuse Task Force

Final Report

July 2009

Introduction and Background

On August 15, 2007 the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) announced plans to close Mayview State Hospital ["Hospital"] in South Fayette Township, Allegheny County by December 31, 2008. Mayview State Hospital originally opened in 1893 and has been operated by DPW since 1941.

The Mayview State Hospital Land Reuse Task Force ("Task Force") was formed at the request of DPW following the announcement of the Hospital's closure. This practice has been customary as state-owned mental health facilities across the Commonwealth have been closed in previous years. The results of the dispositions of six previous DPW properties (three state hospitals and three homes for the developmentally disabled) are as follows:

- Three facilities were transferred to local governments;
- Two were transferred to other state agencies; and
- One was sold through a competitive bidding process to a private organization.

The mission of the Task Force was to determine the best use of the Mayview property, including buildings and land, once the hospital closed. Special consideration is being given to the interests of the citizens, the surrounding community, and the possible influences upon environmental, historical, and cultural resources that reside on and surround the property. The Task Force was composed of representatives of local, county and state government; business and environmental interests; school and health care officials and the general public and held meetings throughout 2008 and 2009 beginning in February of 2008.

The property encompasses approximately 240 acres and is surrounded on three sides by Chartiers Creek, a tributary to the Ohio River. 70 acres of the property serves as wetland mitigation through an agreement between the Department of Transportation and DPW. *(Current acreage figures are an estimate based on plotting of deeds. Official acreage will be determined by a boundary survey to be complete by September 2009.)* Neighboring properties include Boyce-Mayview Park located in Upper St. Clair; Wingfield Pines, an open, green space owned by the Allegheny Land Trust; and Fairview Park, a recreational park owned by South Fayette Township. It is estimated that 35 percent of the property is covered with buildings/impervious surfaces. Approximately 60 developable acres are located on the flat, lower portion of the property while 40 developable acres are located on the upper portion of the property adjacent to Fairview Park. The property is accessed by Mayview Road, which is maintained by the Commonwealth. The rail line that traverses the property is still active and is currently owned and operated by Genesee and Wyoming, Inc.

Recommendations – Executive Summary

1. Ensure that South Fayette Township is able to utilize the "upper" portion of the property, west of Mayview Road, for recreational and/or park space.
2. Ensure that the property is sold at fair market value based on highest and best use.
3. Dedicate the proceeds from the sale of the property to a restricted revenue account to be used for regional mental health/mental retardation housing and peer counseling services.
4. Preserve the environmentally sensitive areas and establish conservation easements for the creek, wetlands, steep slopes and wooded areas.

5. Establish a trail/recreational easement in the flood plain area between the rail line and the Chartiers Creek.
6. All established easements should be held by a land trust.
7. Dedicate a memorial to the individuals who lived and were treated at the Hospital through the years.
8. Dispose of the property via Solicitation for Proposals that conform to South Fayette Township and Allegheny County land use plans and task force recommendations.

Support and Rationale for Recommendations

1. Require future buyer to set aside or sell the “upper” portion of the property, west of Mayview Road, for recreational use by South Fayette.

The Mayview property can essentially be viewed as two separate and distinct parcels. The “lower” portion is flatter and contains most of the buildings. The “upper” portion, west of Mayview Road, has limited access, is smaller in size and is at the top of a steep and wooded slope. Additionally the upper portion is immediately adjacent to recreation space that is being developed by South Fayette Township. Due to the size, access, topography and proximity to current recreation space, the Task Force recommends crafting a sales agreement that would ensure that the upper parcel could be utilized by South Fayette Township and restricted for recreation and open space.

2. Ensure that the property is sold at fair market value based on highest and best use.

It is incumbent upon the Department of General Services to ensure that the property is sold at its maximum fair market value. This sale price should recognize the size and scope of the property, market value of similar acreage in the region, and the potential highest and best use of the property.

3. Dedicate the proceeds from the sale of the property to a restricted revenue account to be used for regional mental health/mental retardation housing and peer counseling services.

During DPW’s March 2009 budget hearing, Secretary Estelle Richman noted that the biggest challenge to counties in and around hospital closures is the development or creation of housing. Dedicating sale proceeds to a housing initiative will decrease the burden on the Commonwealth on how to best serve people that are either leaving or want to avoid institutionalization. Additionally, overwhelming public sentiment indicated a preference for using the proceeds to ensure that appropriate, safe and affordable housing is available. Proceeds should also be dedicated to increase peer counseling services in the region. *(Note – achieving this recommendation will require the introduction and passage of separate legislation.)*

4. Preserve the environmentally sensitive areas and establish conservation easements for the creek, wetlands, steep slopes and wooded areas.

With the growing burden of commercial development throughout the region, the disposition of Mayview State Hospital offers a unique opportunity to direct redevelopment of the property in a way that protects areas that are environmentally sensitive. The Chartiers Creek, wetlands, steep slopes and wooded areas should be permanently preserved. Preserving these

areas would achieve goals of the local municipalities and the county. Such conservation easements would ensure the preservation of these areas to serve as common open space, buffers, wildlife habitat, improving water quality, flood protection and stream bank stabilization.

5. Establish a trail/recreational easement in the flood plain area between the rail line and the Chartiers Creek.

Within a quarter mile of the Mayview property there are several highly valued community recreational assets including South Fayette Township Fairview Community Park, Upper St. Clair Township Community Center and Park, Upper St. Clair Environmental Education Center, and the Allegheny Land Trust's Wingfield Pines. It is envisioned that the inclusion of trail easements and public access easements following the sale could ensure the development of an integrated trail system that could link each of these community assets. The trail system could then serve as a regional recreational attraction.

6. All established easements should be held by a land trust.

Conservation easements are a valuable tool to protect natural resources and preserve scenic open space. The organization accepting the easement agrees to monitor and maintain the land in perpetuity to ensure compliance with its terms. To ensure that the land continues to be protected, the easements should be turned over to a local land trust or conservancy for maintenance. With the ultimate use and future ownership of the property unknown, it is critical that a professional land trust or conservancy receive and manage the land.

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7. Dedicate a memorial to the individuals that lives and were treated at the hospital.

For over 100 years, Mayview State Hospital has provided mental health services in the southwest region of Pennsylvania. Dedicating and protecting a memorial to those who lived and died there is very important to the community and Task Force members. Two small memorials currently exist; one on the lower portion of the property; and one on former hospital land now owned by South Fayette Township. The Task Force strongly recommends ensuring that both memorials are placed in an appropriate location with public access.

8. Dispose of the property via Solicitation for Proposals that conform to South Fayette Township and Allegheny County land use plans.

While the Department of General Services has several methods available to it, the Task Force feels strongly that disposition of the Mayview property through a carefully written Solicitation for Proposal (SFP) is the best option. An SFP should be crafted that captures the recommendations set forth in this report and includes a site plan that recognizes both the current and possible new zoning classifications for the property and the county's comprehensive plan. The SFP should detail the types of redevelopment and corresponding issues and development challenges. The SFP should allow for the coordinated development of infrastructure improvements, site marketing, impact review and the securing of needed funding.

Implementation of Recommendations

The following table indicates the stakeholders that will need to be involved in the next stages of the property disposition and the implementation of the recommendations that have been made by the Task Force. This list is certainly not exclusive; additional participants may be needed and are certainly welcome.

<u>Entity</u>	<u>Roles/responsibilities</u>
Dept. of General Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that survey, appraisal and environmental study are conducted (ongoing) • Draw up proposal for sale • Once buyer has been found, draw up sales agreement that reflects the Task Force recommendations concerning easements and recreational use of top portion of the property by South Fayette Township
Dept. of Public Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the property for transfer (ongoing) • Manage the distribution of the proceeds from the sale of the property to appropriate mental health service providers • Assist in moving the memorial still located on hospital grounds to a more suitable location
Allegheny Land Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in creating property easements (determining the type of easements and where to place them) • Manage easements in the future
South Fayette Twp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that zoning is appropriate for desired future use of the property • Work with future buyer to ensure access to property adjacent to Fairview Park for recreational purposes • Work with Genesee and Wyoming railroad in the creation of a trail system along the rail line that is no longer in use
Upper St. Clair Twp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in the creation of easements that will fit in with the USC park adjacent to the property and desired regional use • Work with Genesee and Wyoming railroad in the creation of a trail system along the rail line that is no longer in use
Allegheny County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that easements and future property use fits in with the County's comprehensive plan and Greenways system
Community nonprofit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop/care for memorial to former residents of Mayview
PA General Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass legislation that would designate the proceeds from the sale of a state-owned mental health facility to an account set aside to fund community-based mental health services • Pass legislation to authorize the sale of the property

Conclusion

The Task Force received valuable input from many individuals and organizations including Allegheny County, the Departments of Transportation, General Services and Public Welfare, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Allegheny Land Trust, South Fayette Township, mental health advocates and the public at large. Through a very open and public process, careful consideration was given to the needs of the community and those impacted by the loss of a mental health facility and services. As a result of numerous meetings, informational presentations and public input, this final report represents a consensus of the members of the Task Force.

Many thanks go out to the Department of Public Welfare for organizing the Task Force, providing administrative support and for the use of their facilities for the Task Force meetings. A note of gratitude is also extended to all the members of the Task Force for their time, attention and dedication.

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