

**DRAFT - Portage Creek Corridor Reuse Plan**  
**Public Meeting Notes**  
**June 24, 2008, 1:00 p.m.**  
**Edison Neighborhood Association**

**Attendees:**

Approximately 50 persons attended the meeting and signed in. A list of attendees is on file at the Community Planning and Development offices at 400 W. Michigan.

**Purpose:**

To “kick off” the Portage Creek Corridor Reuse Plan, introduce the consultant team, and get initial input and visions from the public.

**Introduction**

Andrea Augustine spoke about the study, the study area (Portage, Stockbridge, Cork and Burdick) and the objective of the effort. She stressed that this was not a redevelopment plan, rather a land use or reuse plan. The plan ultimately should reflect the community vision and be a basis upon which zoning and related planning commission actions can be taken regarding the corridor. She also said that the plan would reflect a reality-based understanding of the environmental conditions in the area and, based on a market analysis, result in recommendations that were feasible given the understanding of the market. She pointed out that the map entitled Future Use Map was not a proposal or recommendation, but rather a first cut assessment of possible future uses of properties with known or suspected contamination in the study area. Essentially, based on the Fishbeck study, the maps represented the easiest thing to do with the properties. She also pointed out that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was engaged in a years-long Superfund planning process for the Allied Paper site. This process will extend beyond the time frame of the Portage Creek Corridor Reuse Study but that the Portage Creek study would reflect the best available information from the EPA work.

She then introduced Larry Strange who made a power point presentation (refer to the project web site ([www.portagecreekreuse.com](http://www.portagecreekreuse.com)) to see the presentation). During his presentation, Larry Strange reviewed the purpose of the project, the tasks, and the schedule. He reiterated Andrea’s point that the map entitled Future Use Map was a view of the possible uses identified in the Fishbeck environmental report and intended as a starting point for discussion. Following his presentation, Mike Tackett reviewed the Environmental Feasibility Report prepared by Corradino. The full report (Technical Memorandum 1) can be seen on the study website.

Larry Strange then reviewed the next steps in the study. The consultant would be conducting a market analysis, the results of which would factor directly into the land uses proposed for the corridor. A second public meeting would be held in late July or early August and all in attendance would be notified.

## **Public Input and Discussion**

Following the presentation, the consultant team encouraged the public to voice their thoughts, concerns, and visions for the corridor. An engaged discussion ensued and lasted nearly 90 minutes. Following are points made during the discussion. In addition, Larry Strange encouraged people to use the comment forms that were distributed to make comments.

- In response to a question about whether there was a map for the proposed stream relocation plan, it was stated that there were maps and they could be viewed at the city and that, if possible, copies would be put on the project website. (This has been done).
- There was a question about whether the Allied area south of Cork Street had been looked at. Andrea said that the study area was defined to encompass the most logical area but that adjacent areas and plans would also be considered.
- Two residents had concerns that the future use map showed industrial near where they lived. Larry Strange reiterated that this was an assessment of most likely future uses based on existing conditions and not a proposed plan for the area.
- It was stated that there should be connections to Washington Square and that people that live in that area should be able to connect to trails developed in the area.
- The question was raised as to whether the plan would include the “Triangle” commercial district, which is bounded by Portage Rd, Lovers Lane and Cork Street. Larry said that the plan would consider adjacent areas and plans.
- An individual wanted to know when the Allied Site property would be cleaned. The consultant responded that there wasn’t a date. The person followed up with a second question as to whether the entire corridor could be used for one thing. Andrea answered that anything was possible if there was enough money.
- A person stated that the area could be used to benefit the community by bringing in high tech type business/industry could complement the area, limit future contamination, produce jobs, produce revenue, etc. It was stated that the plan needs more Kalamazoo Promises. It is easy to make a park. The community needs to look beyond that. The person’s vision was a development project that produced jobs, benefited youth, and helped create Kalamazoo as a better place to live.
- A person that lives on Homecrest had suggestions for land use: a commercial strip along Cork Street with green space behind that. A part of it could be a dog park like the one on the north side of the city.
- A person said that they had a concern that any proposed residential would be low income. Future residential should be upscale.
- A person said that if the area becomes a park what is to stop it from being turned back into a dump. A solar panel farm could be put in place that could provide power to the neighborhood and make it more difficult for somebody to come in and put in more PCB’s.
- A resident stated that they were concerned about now. Children are walking on Reed and Alcott Streets to school in areas where the sidewalks are bad or nonexistent, there is bad or no lighting, etc. What can be done about this?
- A resident living on Reed Street enjoys the wildlife: deer, heron, etc. There should be more green space with non-intrusive commercial and manufacturing. Don’t put a strip

mall in the middle of the green space. If there is industrial, it should be in the right locations.

- Industrial zones should be connected. Leave existing industrial zones if appropriate or pick industries to go in area.
- A person living on Homecrest stated that they want to keep the area as green as possible. The person enjoys the wildlife and scenery. The individual has a concern about the silt fence. When there is no foliage, it is an eyesore. The individual wanted to know who the owners of the property were. The answer was the responsible party, namely Millenium Holdings.
- A person inquired about the fact that the river was dredged almost a decade ago and it appears there is still contamination. Was the dredging project successful? The answer was that Superfund is a long process. The responsible party (owner) is going through an EPA-funded study process. The work ten years ago was an emergency removal to stop immediate danger to the public and wildlife. It created a landfill on the site which has and is being followed up by studies to figure out the best way to use the area.
- It was noted that Boston has a necklace of parks that are now being connected by a series of trails. It is wonderful. The person also noted that on Cape Cod there are factories that are non-obtrusive and fit the environment well.
- A person asked if somebody could address the issues of the children's advocate. Andrea said she would speak to the right person at the City.
- A person noted that there could be no trees on the cap on the grass so the green space would be tree less. The response provided by the city's environmental consultant was that if the final design is a land use cap the person is right. But, it is unlikely that in the final remedy the entire site will be a cap so there could be trees.
- The question was asked about how much of the property in the shaded areas on the map was available for reuse. Larry Strange said that roughly 60 to 70% was currently available.
- The question was asked about how much control the city has. The city owns some properties, which it does control. For the other properties, this plan will recommend uses which will be incorporated into the comprehensive plan and then be used by the planning commission to evaluate the appropriateness of future projects.
- In follow up to a statement that an owner could protest a zoning change, the comment was made that this plan will be "pie in the sky". The response was that the plan is meant to put into place a vision for the next ten to 15 years. The City can dictate aesthetics, implement design standards, etc.
- A person living on Reed indicated that his dog was affected by the asbestos. How much can be cleaned up. The response was that tearing down the power plant will reduce the possible levels of asbestos in the area.
- What is the time line? This has been going on for years. What is the best guess? What is the best use? The response was that the green space is easiest but a time line is very hard to pin down. Larry Strange indicated that EPA was moving forward and a final Record of Decision (ROD) is expected to be coming out next summer.
- A person indicated that the vision needs to include the new urbanism piece discussed. The Edison neighborhood could embrace this.
- Several people indicated keep the green space, enhance the wildlife.
- A Milwood resident thinks the map did not include enough residential.

After the discussion, people continued to interact individually with the consultants and staff. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.