



March 20, 2017

By E-mail

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RE: Future Development of Marian Pritchett School / Booth Home Site

Mr. Mayor, Major Lloyd, and Members of the City Council:

The North End Neighborhood Association (NENA) recognizes that the Salvation Army's closure of the Marian Pritchett School (also known as the Booth Home) (the "School") is a significant moment in the history of Boise. It means the closure of an important non-profit institution that has flourished for nearly a century in Boise's North End; it also means something new for those residents of the North End that will continue to live past the Salvation Army's plan to move its facilities to Meridian. Most notably, the School's location presents an enormous, and rare, opportunity for the North End. The School site—bounded by 24th Street on the east; Bella Street on the north; 25th Street on the west; and Hazel Street on the south—is one of the last unsubdivided blocks in the North End (the "Site"). This letter seeks to begin a community dialogue among North Enders, the City, the Salvation Army, and all Boiseans that recognize we must begin planning now for how best to utilize the Site's potential. NENA seeks to engage this process to make the most of this rare community development opportunity, while also recognizing the Salvation Army's need to sell the Site for a reasonable return, and encouraging private developers to engage economically feasible projects on the Site.

For reasons that will be described below, NENA intends to begin a community planning process for the Site. We welcome and seek involvement of the City, the Salvation Army, and even any developers that might have plans to purchase the Site, to join the discussion. In so doing, NENA first proposes to hold a charrette (a community design workshop) about the future of the Site. We welcome representatives from Boise City and the Salvation Army to engage with us in the planning of the charrette, to participate in the charrette, or at least plan to attend. We also welcome your thoughts on additional ways to engage at this early phase.

I. NENA Survey on Futures for the Marian Pritchett School

For approximately the last year, occasional developers have sought NENA’s approval for project plans at the Site. NENA was also approached by preservation groups and housing groups that sought approval for their visions. After much deliberation, we did not feel we could adequately approve of any plan without a better sense of what the community wanted. To assist us in obtaining a better sense of the community’s ideal visions for the Site’s redevelopment, we decided to conduct a survey asking basic questions about what to retain of the existing Site, and what the community wanted in any new development on the Site (the “NENA Survey”). The NENA Survey was conducted between January 30, 2017 and March 4, 2017, and publicized throughout the North End through NENA’s website, NextDoor North End neighborhood groups, and through word of mouth. In that time, 215 respondents answers the NENA Survey. Of those 215 respondents, 53 persons (25%) lived within 2 blocks of the Site, and 67 persons (31%) lived between 2 and 5 blocks of the Site. See Table 1. Almost all of the remaining respondents lived in the North End. Although not presented in this letter, almost all respondents provided their names, addresses, and e-mail contacts to verify the authenticity of their location. We are happy to provide the original comments summarized here upon request.

Table 1. Location	Number	Percentage (rounded)
Within 2 blocks of the site	53	25%
Within 5 blocks of the site	67	31%
In the North End in the area bounded by Harrison, 28th, Hill, and State Streets	50	23%
Otherwise live in the North End but not in an area otherwise described above	38	18%
Outside of the North End	3	1%
No location provided	4	2%
Total Respondents	215	

Respondents were asked a series of questions, some of which required a directed response while others permitted open-ended responses. One question of particular importance to the site asked the respondents to rate how much they agreed with the statement, “The historic 1921 building at the site should be preserved.” Overwhelmingly, 65% of respondents (140) said they strongly agreed with the statement, and 17% of respondents (36) said they somewhat agreed with the statement. That means that 82% of respondents expressed a preference that the 1921 building be preserved. See Table 2.

Table 2. Agree or disagree: The historic 1921 building at the site should be preserved	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	140	65%
Somewhat agree	36	17%
Neutral	27	12%
Somewhat disagree	6	3%
Strongly disagree	6	3%
Total Respondents	215	

On the other hand, respondents were also asked to rate how much they agreed with the statement, “The modern additions at the site should be preserved.” The respondents were far more divided. Just 23% of respondents agreed with the statement at all (8% (17) strongly agree; 15% (33) somewhat agree). The largest percentage of individuals, 37% (80) stated that they were neutral on preserving the modern structures. In fact, more people—39%—disagreed with the proposition, and thus expressing a willingness to see the modern additions demolished (18% (40) somewhat disagree; 21% (45) strongly disagree). See Table 3.

Table 3. Agree or disagree: The modern additions at the site should be preserved	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	17	8%
Somewhat agree	33	15%
Neutral	80	37%
Somewhat disagree	40	18%
Strongly disagree	45	21%
Total Respondents	215	

The respondents were also asked, in an open-ended question, to state their ideas for the future of the Site. Respondents were also able to provide more than one idea. Some respondents wrote entire paragraphs, others just a few words; some respondents gave just one idea, while others gave many. Those varied responses were then tabulated by their general subject matter. Table 4 illustrates the variety of future uses North Enders envisioned for the location. The most popular ideas for the Site were a community center (21% (59)) followed closely by small, neighborhood-serving retail, with many respondents recommending yoga studios, coffee shops, and similar smaller shops (15% (44)). Emphasizing the importance of preserving the 1921 building, the third most common response was simply to preserve historic buildings on the Site (14% (39)). Other popular ideas were single family housing (12% (35)) and a park (11% (32)).

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Table 4: My ideas for the future of this site include the following (open-ended question, could choose more than one response):	Number	Percentage of all responses (could indicate more than one)
Community Center	59	21%
Small Businesses (Retail/Commercial) (yoga, coffee, brew pub, small shops and similar)	44	15%
Preserve/Renovate Historic Building	39	14%
Single Family Housing	35	12%
Park	32	11%
School Facilities	18	6%
Library	11	4%
Transitional Housing	11	4%
Pool	10	4%
Community Garden	8	3%
High Density Housing	7	2%
Retirement/Senior Center	7	2%
Child Care	4	1%
Total Responses	285	
Total Respondents	179	

The respondents were also asked, in an open-ended question, to state what they did not want to replace the existing use at the Site. Here again, respondents were also able to provide more than one idea. Again, some respondents wrote entire paragraphs, others just a few words; some respondents gave just one idea, while others gave many. Those varied responses were then tabulated by their general subject matter. Table 5 presents the responses. The most noted uses that respondents did not want appeared to revolve around housing, with 31% (54) noting they did not want high density housing; 14% (24) noting housing generally, but not specifying a particular type; and 10% (17) not wanting high end housing. On the other hand, 20% (36) said that they did not want “commercial” uses and 7% (13) said they did not want retail.

Table 5. I do not want this site to be replaced with the following (open-ended question, could choose more than one response):	Number	Percentage of all responses (could indicate more than one)
High Density Housing	54	31%
Commercial	36	20%
Housing (Type Unspecified)	24	14%
High End Housing	17	10%
Retail	13	7%
Anything	13	7%
Rehab/Halfway House	9	5%
Demolition of Historic Building	5	3%
Affordable Housing	4	2%
School	1	1%
Community Center	1	1%
Total Responses	177	
Total Respondents	164	

Tables 4 and 5, taken together, illustrate that there are varying opinions among North Enders with regard to the Site. What does appear clear, however, is that at least a sizable number of respondents are willing to entertain and, indeed, might even prefer, a mix of uses at the Site. For instance, respondents were asked how they would feel about a “Hyde Park West,” which would offer neighborhood-serving retail, such as a coffee shop. See Table 6. Respondents were expressly asked whether they might consider additional density at the site to help pay for the use. Of the 138 respondents that answered this question, 60% (83) said they would be interested in such a use, and 17% (23) said that “maybe” they would be interested. This reinforces that respondents may be open to particular types of retail or commercial uses, and might even be willing to entertain heightened densities to accomplish such a project, though many remain skeptical and likely would want to see a specific plan for the site.

Table 6. How would you feel about a mixed-use development that included some commercial at this site? For instance, imagine a "Hyde Park West" that would have a coffee shop or something similar? Would you be okay with increased density at the site to pay for a creative use like that?	Number	Percentage
Yes	83	60%
Maybe	23	17%
No	32	23%
Total	138	

In the NENA Survey’s final open-ended question, respondents were asked what services this part of the North End needed. Here again, respondents could provide more than one answer and answers were tabulated to generalized categories. Overwhelmingly, the respondents noted the need for a community center (41% (97)), as well as an interest in informal public places that were operated by small businesses, such as coffee shops (15% (34)); restaurants (9% (22) and small grocers or markets (9% (20)). See Table 7.

Table 7. What services does this part of the North End need that could be provided at this site other than residential?	Number	Percentage
Community/Arts Center	97	41%
Coffee	34	15%
Restaurants	22	9%
Grocer/Market	20	9%
No Services	17	7%
Beer/Wine/Brew Pub	9	4%
Park/Dog Park	8	3%
Library/Book Store	8	3%
School Facility	7	3%
Child Care	5	2%
Small Shops	4	2%
Yoga/Fitness Studio	3	1%
Total Responses	234	
Total Respondents	112	

II. Survey Summary

The NENA Survey offers some important lessons to the neighborhood, the City, and future developers seeking to redevelop the Site. First, there is overwhelming support for preserving the 1921 building, but there is not significant support for preserving the modern additions. See Tables 2 and 3. Second, while there is no one vision supported by all North Enders, a significant number of individuals, including those that live in close proximity to the Site, want development on the Site to include more than just residential dwellings. See Tables 4, 5, and 6. Among the most sought-after non-residential uses are a community center and small, community-serving businesses that would provide a sense of place, such as a coffee shop, a restaurant, a yoga studio or a grocer. Further, there is a suggestion that respondents might be willing to exchange some heightened density if they received community benefits, such as preservation of the 1921 building or community-serving retail, but the specifics of the plan would matter significantly. See Table 6. Finally, respondents indicated they are not interested in more housing alone, whether that is high density housing, high end housing, or just “housing” generally. See Table 5. At the same time, there is trepidation about what it would mean to bring commercial or retail into the neighborhood, and that caused others to note a concern with such uses. Table 5.

III. Inclusive Planning for the Future Now

No matter what the future holds for the Site, the NENA Survey indicates that beginning an inclusive planning process sooner than later is an important step in ensuring that the neighborhood, the City, and any potential developer all understand each other’s priorities. Luckily, the NENA Survey makes clear that most North End residents are supportive of development that would not only prove economically viable for a developer, but also make the highest and best use of this rare Site for the community, too.

We look forward to continued engagement on this Site with both the City and the Salvation Army, as well as further understanding the community’s interests in the Site through engagement beyond the NENA Survey.

With regards,

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/for/ North End Neighborhood Association

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