

VIENNA TOWN HOUSE PUBLIC FORUM #1 RESULTS

The first Vienna Town House forum was conducted on May 9th, 2007. The purpose of the forum was to educate participants about the master planning process for the Town House building and site, and about the condition the Town House is in, and to brainstorm about fears, concerns, hopes, aspirations, and potential uses for the Town House and its 2-acre site. This preliminary feedback will guide the Community Design Workshop in the fall. About 30 citizens attended the forum.

After viewing an informative Powerpoint presentation with maps and descriptions of the Town House and site, and a detailed overview of the planning process, participants broke up into four small groups of 6-8 people for brainstorming sessions. The first exercise was to brainstorm fears associated with planning for the Town House and site. Participants shared their fears and concerns for development, and facilitators recorded their thoughts on a flipchart sheet. Next, participants switched gears and were asked to brainstorm their hopes and aspirations for the Town House and site. These were recorded on flipchart sheets as well. The final brainstorming exercise was called Small, Medium, and Large Plans. Facilitators asked participants to think about what they would consider the minimum necessary plans for uses of and changes to the Town House and site (Small Plans), the most likely / average amount of changes (Medium Plans), and their biggest dreams for the potential of the site (Large Plans). These were all recorded on flipchart sheets. Each of the four groups presented their brainstorming results to the rest of the large group.

There were many common themes among the groups. In terms of fears, all of the small groups expressed concern about funding the plans: an inability to afford it, an increase of taxes, using money improperly, or not using enough money and failing to repair the VTH adequately. Another big fear was that the historical character of the VTH would be compromised. Participants were afraid of not thinking far enough ahead, and of the VTH not being used for meetings, or worse, not being used at all (other than for storage). There was also fear that a big addition would overpower the VTH.

Hopes were shared by several groups as well. All four groups wanted the VTH used for a town meeting place, for public use. A bathroom, kitchen, better acoustics,

storage for files, and efficient energy sources were very popular. Almost all of the groups hoped for restoration, maintenance, and preservation of the VTH, whether it was used for town offices, archives, or flexible space.

Every group listed repairs and preservation (especially for the roof and foundation) as a priority for Small Plans. Three groups included a bathroom, two listed storage space, two listed a ramp for accessibility, two listed better signage, and two hoped for energy efficiency. For Medium Plans, there were no common plans among the groups. Large Plans had the most consensus (three groups) about paved parking and the inclusion of a huge room for public meetings and voting. Half the groups wanted a new building for town offices, half the groups wanted recreational fields, and half the groups wanted the VTH to house the Historical Society.

There were so many similar thoughts and values during the group presentations that people commented on it. It is possible that the only reason the Small, Medium, and Large Plans exercise did not illustrate more common themes between the groups is that participants had slightly different ideas about the concept of what a Small Plan would entail, etc. In other words, values were very similar, but people prioritized them a little differently.

RAW DATA:

FEARS	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Inability to afford it	√			
Historical character compromised	√		√	
Fall into disrepair	√			
Hit by lightning	√			
A museum, not a functioning townhouse	√			
Juggling priorities, making bad decisions	√			
Not thinking far enough ahead	√		√	√
Divisive process	√			
Need for offices compromising historical character	√			
Bldg. staying the same (used for storage)	√		√	
VTH not used for meetings	√		√	
Increased taxes		√	√	
Who will be the contractor?		√		
Taxpayers not getting full use of bldg. (e.g. private functions, restricted use)		√		

Vandalism – insecure building		√		
Big addition that overpowers VTH		√		√
An addition that has to be removed, throwing \$ away b/c of poor planning		√		
Trying to save \$, not repair properly			√	
Committee being close-minded to ideas			√	
Bldg. foundation will compromise bldg.			√	
Large area of paved parking				√
Addition structurally compatible				√
Contemporary bldg. or addition near VTH, inappropriate to time period				√
Destruction of VTH interior				√
Investment results in decreased use				√
Not using money appropriately				√
No bathroom				√
No accessibility				√
Visually prominent ramp				√
HOPES	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
VTH cleaned up, restored	√	√		
VTH used for town offices	√		√	
VTH used for town meeting place	√	√	√	√
Bathroom added	√		√	√
Addition on 2 acres for offices, voting, meeting	√			
VTH = town library, display for historical things, archives	√	√		
Flexible space, easily used by people	√			√
Efficient use of space, energy (heat)	√		√	√
VTH kept as is	√			
Bathroom where office is	√			
Maintenance and preservation	√			√
Better acoustics	√		√	√
Using VTH to fix town's problems	√			
Additional bldg. or addition		√		
Historical Society		√		
Recreational areas		√		
Town meeting		√		
Dedicated town offices on site		√		
Museum		√		
Site looks the same		√		
More public use		√		√
New bldg. w/ appropriate architecture			√	

Site-sensitive landscaping			√	
Address necessities first			√	
Master Plan w/ VTH incorporated			√	
Maintain character			√	
Storage for files/stuff currently there			√	√
Consensus on what architectural change can do while maintaining character			√	
Kitchen facility			√	√
Builders – local, knowledgeable				√
Bulletin board replaced w/ period and location				√
Fire exit				√
Appropriate outdoor lighting				√
Check and scrutinize \$ estimates				√
SMALL PLANS	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Preservation, repairs – roof, foundation	√	√	√	√
Bathroom, septic system	√	√		√
Storage space	√	√		
New ramp, accessibility	√	√		
Bushes removed	√			
Better signage, improve kiosk	√			√
Gravity floor drain		√		
Energy efficiency (More insulation, storm windows, new furnace, water heater)		√		√
Additional parking		√		
Drainage vent foundation				
Restoration – scrape/paint			√	
More furnace for second egress			√	
Handicap accessible heated outhouse			√	
MEDIUM PLANS	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Ramp at back entrance	√			
Repaired parking lot	√			
Landscaping	√			
Storage space	√			
Signage	√			
Building up to code		√		
Move all town offices onto site		√		
Move town offices out of VTH		√		
Extensive repairs (new roof, furnace, insulation, structural repairs)		√		
Restore interior paint			√	

New roof like original			√	
Addition w/ bathroom, filing/storage, new selectman's office, meeting space, kitchen			√	
Expand VTH to include kitchen and meeting space				√
Conference rooms for org.s or flex space				√
LARGE PLANS	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
New bldg. for town offices	√	√		
Paved parking	√	√	√	
New bldg. – architecturally beautiful, blends in with town, makes town proud	√			
Beautiful landscaping	√			
New bldg. – green, energy efficient	√			
New bldg. – no scrimping on \$, quality	√			
Planning for next 50-100 years	√			
Huge room for town meetings and voting	√	√	√	
VTH = Historical Society functions and meetings, or research center	√	√		
Fire proof storage space	√			
Recreational fields, playground		√	√	
Museum		√		
Security system		√		
Planned site – campus style, multiple features			√	
Park			√	
Small meeting spaces			√	
Library			√	
Restructure town organization				√
Expand VTH to accommodate municipal gov't (license, tax, planning, clerk, treasurer, permits, records, permits)				√