



Vol. LIX, No. 10

March 9, 2005

Web Edition

In Looking at Witherspoon's Future, Group Keeps an Eye on Hospital Site

Matthew Hersh

Though the trustees of Princeton HealthCare System (PHCS) have indicated that they will focus their energies on relocation, the residents of what is one day likely to be the former hospital neighborhood are focused on potential future uses of the 11.76 acre site that could contribute to redefining the neighborhood.

With the Princeton Health Care Task Force Report recommending various uses if the University Medical Center at Princeton vacates that land, neighbors of the hospital worried Saturday morning that bad planning and money-making development will trump efforts for inclusive planning.

The discussion, held at the Princeton Public Library and facilitated by Princeton Future, a community-based group that examines in-town development, also addressed task force recommendations that, some worry, dictate zoning variances granted to benefit future occupants of the hospital site.

"It's kind of strange that here we sit, and we're finding a way to enhance the beneficiary of something that was

NEWS

Lead Stories
Other News
Sports

FEATURES

Calendar
Mailbox
Obituaries
Weddings/
Engagements

ENTERTAINMENT

Art
Cinema
Music/Theater

COLUMNS

By Jean Stratton
It's New to Us
Princeton Personality
Chess Forum
Town Talk

CONTACT US

Masthead
Circulation
Feedback

HOW TO SUBMIT

Advertising
Letters
Press Releases

detrimental to the community," said James Floyd of Harris Road. Princeton Future is in the midst of its Witherspoon Street Corridor Study, which not only addresses the use of the hospital site, but the commercial zone on the southern end toward Princeton University.

BACK ISSUES

Last Week
Archive

Not necessarily in response to the Health Care Task Force recommendations, Princeton Future compiled a list of its own recommendations for the future use of the hospital's land based on the series of Saturday morning meetings that began in December.

Real Estate
Classified Ads

The report, while only a preliminary draft, was clear in stating that the current density of the hospital site is such because urban hospitals have to be densely developed for efficiency purposes. However, the report indicated that any redevelopment of that site, be it housing, affordable, senior, University graduate, or otherwise, be done at reduced density.

Like Town Topics?

Let Town Topics
Advertisers Know
You Saw Their Ad.

In addition, the report suggests that any redevelopment onsite be tax-paying, which is in concert with the task force report.

One point of concern for residents was the task force recommendation to allow for up to 35,000 additional square-footage onsite in anticipation of the immediate needs of the hospital until it moves in the six years targeted. PHCS officials have offered no clear indication that there is an intention to use that 35,000 square feet if granted the necessary variances.

"I'm not supporting that at all and I would be looking at that very carefully," said Hendricks Davis of John Street. "I just think that it doesn't hold to their desire if they want to relocate the whole operation."

Echoing the sentiments of the task force's Mr. Reed, who has spent the last two weeks making his rounds to various municipal bodies presenting the task force findings, Mr. Davis said that none of the developmental

planning should be predicated on the hospital's "need to generate capital to sell that property."

Robert Geddes, co-chair of Princeton Future, said the history of the neighborhood needs to remain as part of the general discourse as the community weighs developmental needs on Witherspoon, calling for a preservation "looking backwards and development looking forwards."

But having said that, Mr. Geddes said he was "very skeptical" about zoning as a means to achieve those goals of balanced planning.

The next Princeton Future meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 16 at 9 a.m. in the Community Room at the Princeton Public Library.

Website Design by [Kiyomi Camp](#)