

PEOPLE'S VOICES SHAPE DIX CHOICES

BY RICHARD STRADLING
STAFF WRITER

A large city park, a state office campus and a pedestrian-friendly mix of homes and offices are a consulting firm's options for the Dorothea Dix Hospital campus.

DIX A NEW DIRECTION

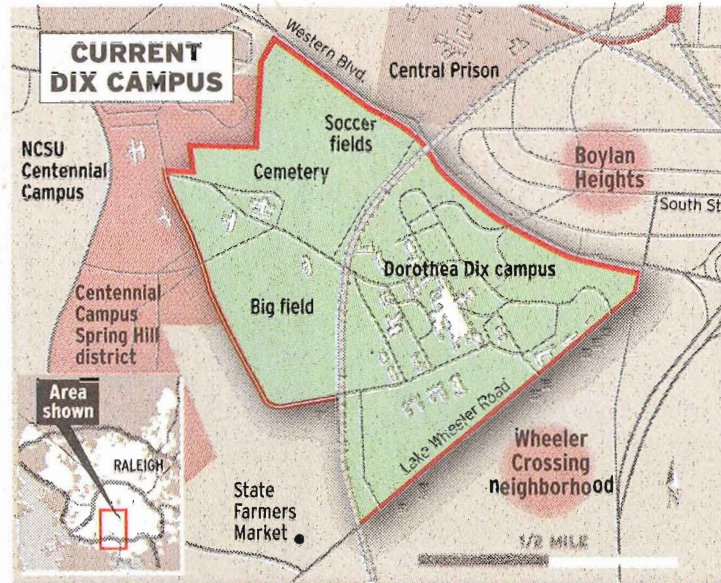
LandDesign, a Charlotte-based firm, was hired by the state and Raleigh to craft a plan for the 300-acre campus after Dix closes in 2007. It based the proposals on comments from interest groups, from a public meeting that drew more than 200

people last month and from hundreds of letters and e-mail messages.

Tonight, LandDesign planners will divide the crowd at a public workshop into small groups and ask each to pick the scenario it likes best. They will then ask the groups to tinker, adding or subtracting and recording their ideas on maps.

LandDesign will take the ideas and write one proposal in July.

To participate: The workshop is from 6 to 8 tonight at Raleigh Convention and Conference Center, 500 Fayetteville Street Mall. Use the Wilmington Street entrance.



Source: Dorothea Dix Property Study Commission, staff research

The News & Observer

The three scenarios

■ “Central Park” — A large park with athletic fields, gardens and perhaps new recreation facilities. Some Dix buildings would be used for civic purposes, such as museums or an aquarium, or local mental health programs. The “big field,” a 55-acre grassy area near the State Farmers Market, would remain open. Homes would be built facing the neighborhoods across Lake Wheeler Road.

■ Health and Office Campus — A campus for up to 3,700 state

Department of Health and Human Services workers, and for local mental health services. Some of the dozens of Dix buildings would be renovated, and new offices built. Parts of the campus, including the soccer fields, would remain open. Homes would be built facing the neighborhoods across Lake Wheeler Road.

■ Mixed-use — The health and office campus would be mixed with more private development, mostly housing and some offices, with room for civic facilities. Retail would be limited to a small shopping area along Lake Wheeler Road. Part of the big field would be developed.

INSIDE

PLANT PUSH: A group wants a \$30 million botanical garden at Dix site. ► 16A

Garden supporters see a tourist draw

They defend price of \$30 million

BY RICHARD STRADLING
STAFF WRITER

Building a world-class botanical garden at the Dorothea Dix Hospital campus could cost \$30 million. On the other hand, the garden could draw as many as 1 million visitors a year within a decade, including about 150,000 tourists from outside the state.

Those estimates come from a recent report by the Wake County Botanical Garden Society, which is pressing the state to turn the 300-acre Dix campus into a botanical garden after the hospital closes in 2007.

Willie Pilkington, a Wake County hobby gardener who is leading the effort, said society members based their estimates on the experiences of other large public botanical gardens around the country.

Pilkington said it is too early to say how the garden would be financed. State or local governments may have to get the project started, he said, but the park's board would probably hire a fundraiser to tap other sources. Successful gardens in other cities also receive dues from members and charge entrance fees.

"It does not pay for itself if it's just sitting there," Pilkington said.

"If you don't have a fee, then you have to figure out where the money is coming from."

Talk of fees has worried some who want to see the Dix campus become a public park. Friends of Dorothea Dix Park, a coalition of environmental and community groups, thinks a botanical garden could work at Dix but opposes charging the public for access.

"Fees limit the use to tourists and people who can afford the fees, instead of the general public," said Jay Spain, the coalition's president. "The very rich and the very poor should be able to use it."

The garden society also has alienated some park supporters by insisting that soccer fields now at Dix be moved somewhere else. The fields, built atop a former landfill off Western Boulevard, occupy space needed for the garden, Pilkington said.

The botanical garden would be a collection of plants from around the world, carefully labeled with common and scientific names and arranged by habitat or theme, such as rock gardens, desert gardens and tropical gardens. To get started, the garden society wants the General Assembly to designate Dix as a protected botanical garden district and help create a governing board.

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