

CONCERNS AND ISSUES ON RESTORATION PROJECT USES

CHANGING TIMES AND CHANGING NEEDS

This once active military town or village had its purpose and the need for the various types of buildings. All the needs of yesterday have ceased and are not coming back. Our needs today are historical, educational, and recreational. So a number of responders have presented a variety of ways to meet these needs to start the restoration process.

RESPONSES THAT ADD VALUE TO GATEWAY

There are a number of interested parties that will make Fort Hancock more attractive and more enjoyable to the visiting public. Why not an art studio to browse about and maybe buy a memento of your visit? How about a coffee shop with outdoor seating to relax and plan your next stop on the tour? Imagine a youngster getting a chance to sail or kayak on Sandy Hook Bay. These are some needed additions to highlight the rebirth of this old, abandoned military village.

COMMENT ON ASBURY PARK PRESS EDITORIAL ON RESIDENCES

A recent editorial in the Asbury Park Press on Jan 28 overviewed the interested parties' responses and then gave their opinion of proper uses for these buildings. In my opinion there needs to be clarification and determination that those houses located on Officers' Row should remain Residential. However, my issue is with those who want the building to be solely a "private" residence. This will be a problem from the public's perception. You can expect a clamor and possibly a lawsuit from some irate parties, especially those rejected in selection process, that this exclusive use violates the intent of the restoration project. Private use completely denies any possibility that the general public will be afforded the opportunity to visit and stay over in these homes. You create an impression that a sign outside exists stating "Private Home. Keep Out".

KEEPING THE HOME-LIKE CHARACTER

The collection of RFEI responses show there are a significant number who want to restore their house on Officers' Row as a primary residence. Further review actually indicated that many residences would function as their primary home but also would be converted in various types of rental uses, such as, B & B, and Guest Houses. From an investment and cost justification position this seems to be a "win-win" scenario since these restored homes would be enjoyed by the investor and also those guests who can also share in the historic experience

INVESTORS ARE MORE THAN INVESTORS

For those willing to invest time, money, and effort to restore their building are actually more than "Innkeepers". They will also be the "caretakers" of these houses. They have restored, improved and will continually maintain these buildings for their family, friends, and the many paying

guests to enjoy. The high costs to upkeep and improve these buildings might be offset by the guest rental fees. This income helps but is never a guarantee that it will be a very profitable. Whatever the rental income, it comes from lot of hard work and these investors deserve it. These are the people who are willing to “share” their home. These are the people who are making Gateway even more inviting. Now the general public is invited to stay over. Up to now this never existed.

ADVICE TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND NPS

We now have a menu of restoration “re-uses” that can contribute to the start of the revitalization program. I emphasize “start” since there are possibly many other dormant buildings that will eventually targeted for adaptive use. It will be difficult to be totally correct in the committee’s conclusions and recommendations to the National Park Service. At the January 10 meeting I stated that you should consider those adaptive re-use proposals that positively will restore the buildings into multi-use Residences giving the public access via various rental options. Officers’ Row is the showpiece of historic Fort Hancock and every effort should be made to move this along with many restored buildings. When the Selection Process by the NPS does occur, they should make every effort to fill those buildings with “home-like” adaptive use investors. NPS should work with these parties. Judging from their comments the Restoration Project for them is not only a business opportunity, but it is very personal goal.

Submitted by: Tom Polk