

Former Indiana Women's Prison Redevelopment Information Session

June 16, 2026



DMD Team Introductions

- **Carmen Lethig**, Deputy Director for Planning, Preservation & Design
- **Jennifer Fults**, Deputy Director, Strategy & Collaboration
- **Marlee Cawthorn**, City Architect
- **Eddie Shei**, Senior Project Manager
- **Noah Stern**, Senior Urban Design Reviewer
- **Piers Kirby**, Administrator, Real Estate & Brownfield Redevelopment
- **Matthew Hostetler**, Principal Program Manager, Real Estate
- **Krista Weatherholt**, Land Use Strategy, Principal Planner
- **Heather Reid**, Long Range Planner
- **Meg Busch**, Administrator, Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission
- **Nikeshia Fomby**, Administrator, Engagement

Why Are We Here?

Purpose

- Learn about the site's historical significance
- Understand the current status of the property
- Review DMD's redevelopment process
- Discuss opportunities and constraints
- Identify ways residents can participate moving forward

Site Location

- 15-acre site on the Near Eastside of Indianapolis.
- Located at **401 N. Randolph Street**.
- Adjacent to established residential neighborhoods
- Close to downtown and existing community assets
- The site's location presents both significant opportunities and important planning considerations.



Historical Timeline

- 1869 – Institution established
- 1873 – Opened as the first separate prison for women in the United States
- Early 1900s – Campus expanded
- 2009 – Indiana Women's Prison relocated
- 2009–2017 – Indianapolis Re-Entry Educational Facility for men operated
- 2017 – Facility closed. State owned until late 2024.
- 2024 – Site transferred from the State of Indiana to the City of Indianapolis in December 2024.



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What is DMD's Role



DMD coordinates:



Community engagement



Planning activities



Redevelopment strategy



Consultant management

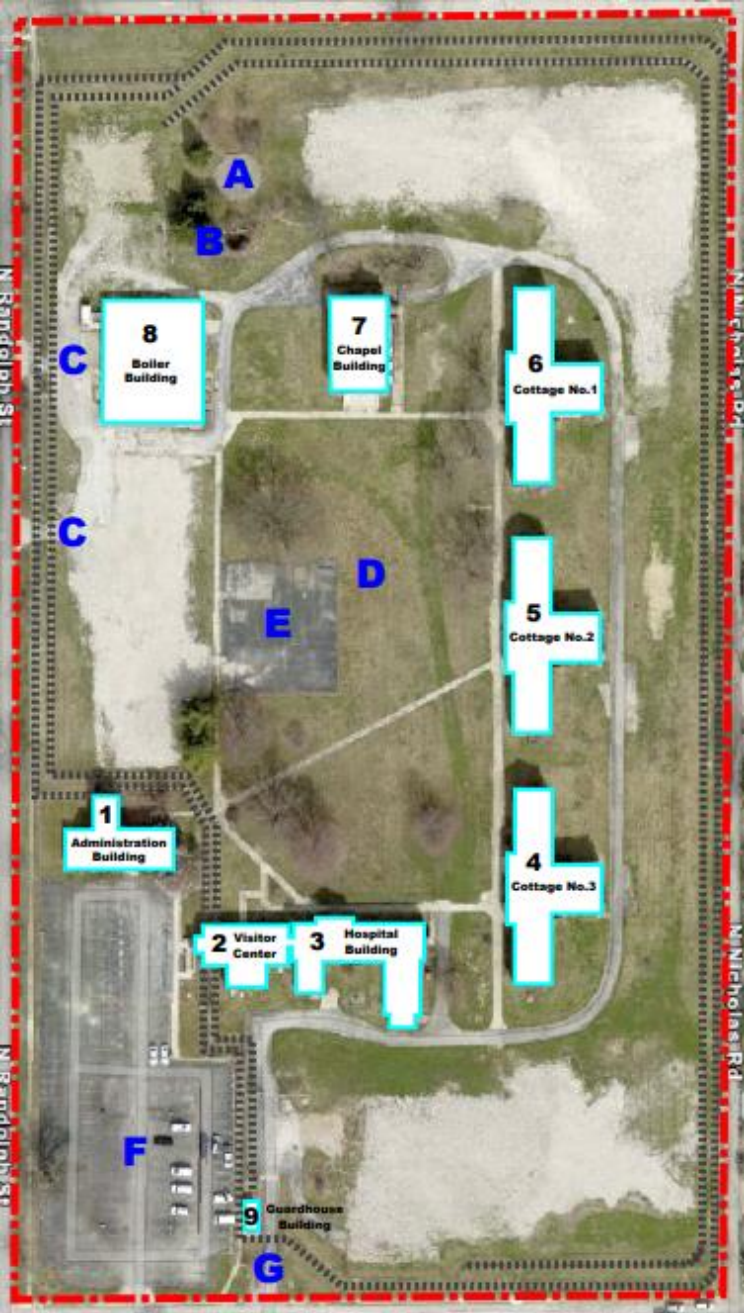


Interagency coordination

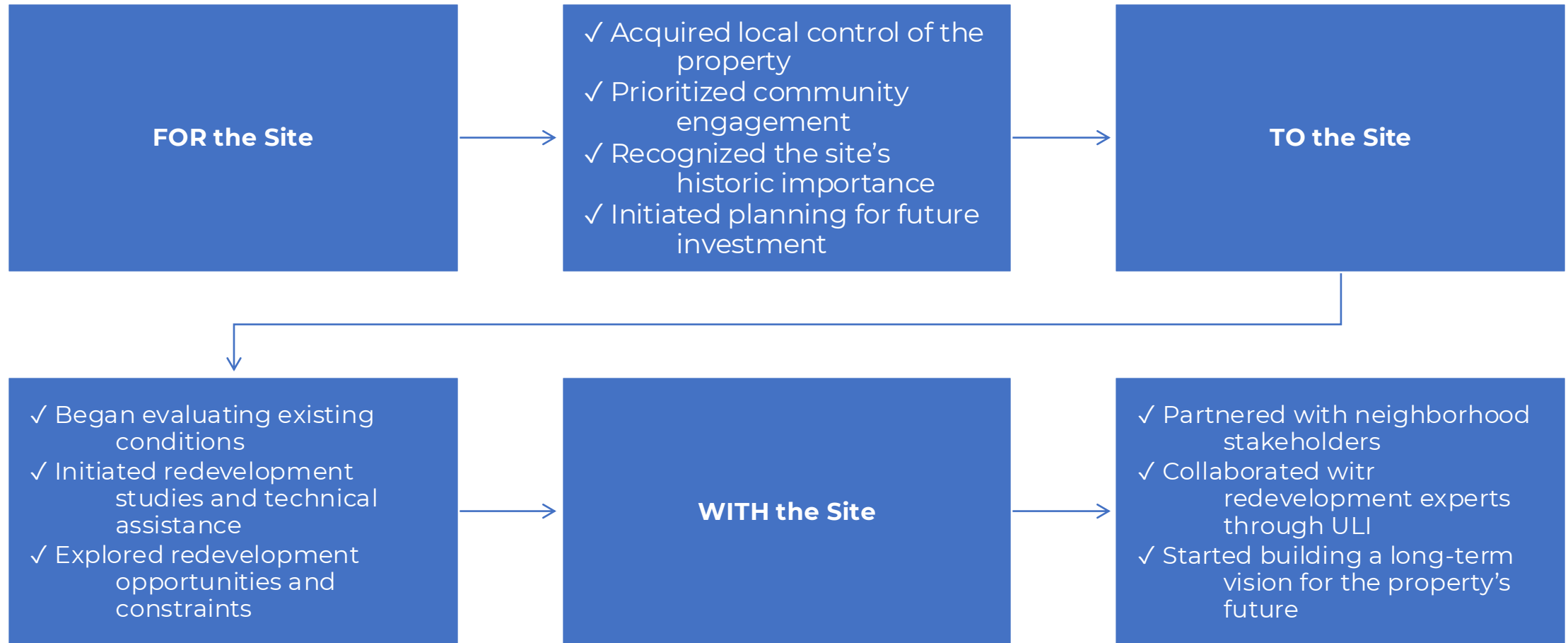


Recommendations to decision-makers

Site Map Showing Current Buildings



Redevelopment since December 2024 ...



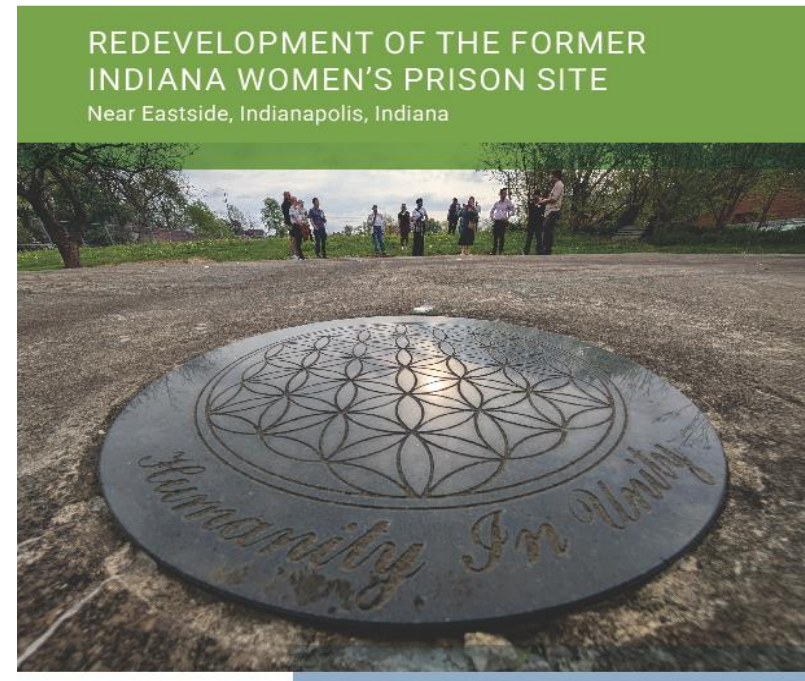
Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) report proposes a community-driven redevelopment for the 15-acre former Indiana Women's Prison site, focusing on mixed-income housing and the adaptive reuse of historic structures. The plan emphasizes honoring the site's history, preserving key buildings like the Chapel, and incorporating local retail, while ensuring community-backed development.

[ULI Indiana TAP Report](#)



SCAN ME



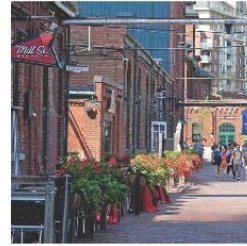
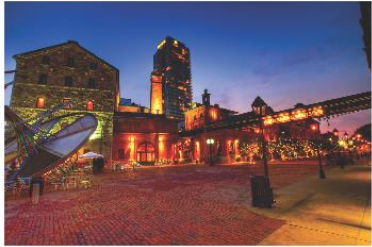
Technical Assistance Panel Report | APRIL 29-30, 2025

Student Projects



The Distillery District- Toronto, Canada

- Designed/ Preserved by ERA Architects
- The project opened in May of 2003 and has been a very successful adaptation that has attracted locals and tourists there for 22 years.
- The City of Toronto provides the Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program to eligible heritage properties which was utilized to conserve historic and cultural attributes therefore ensuring high standards and meeting the guidelines of the program. standards
- The preservationists utilized the Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program offered by the City of Toronto, which provided funds for the project and assisted in the cost of damage repairs and historic restoration as well.
- Some of the elements that we are taking away from this precedent and utilizing in our proposal is the utilization of the original materiality and the mixed use programming to encourage more foot traffic to the area. we are also inspired by the emphasis on the "Distillery" and would like to try to incorporate that by inviting Women owned business onto our plaza.
- The project incorporated local groups and stakeholders through the architects and consultants. They incorporated the community's needs while preserving a historic identity that they are holding onto.



Liberty at Lorton

- Liberty Crest once a former prison was shut down in 2001
- In 2006 the government took the site and it was registered as a National Historic Place
- BBGM Architects & Interiors provided the architectural and interior design services for the adaptive reuse project
- Because the site was historic they needed to preserve as much of the characteristic of the prison as they could
- The site opened in 2017 with much of the former prison intact and only little changes to the facade
- This allowed for them to get tax credits from Fairfax County along with bonds from the Virginia Housing Development Authority

Lessons

- The main idea of this project connects with what we are wanting to propose in Indiana
- The former dorms being turned into apartments and retail is similar to our approach of providing restaurants, retail stores, and daycare centers for Indiana.
- The site also features a large open space utilized for festivals and events is similar to the central courtyard at the former womens prison
- The community was apart of the master plan of the Liberty at Lorton project being able to give feedback to what the community wanted



2025 Community Preference Survey: Purpose



Identify community priorities for future uses of the site.



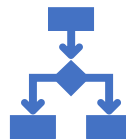
Understand preferences regarding potential redevelopment concepts, such as housing, open space, retail, cultural uses, and community amenities.



Ensure community voices are incorporated into the planning process.



Balance redevelopment opportunities with historic preservation considerations.

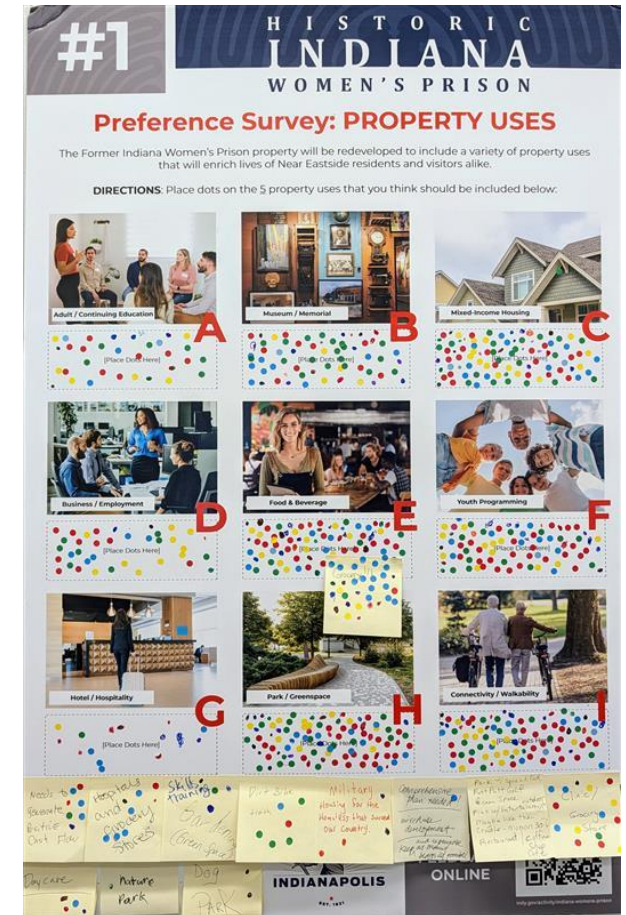
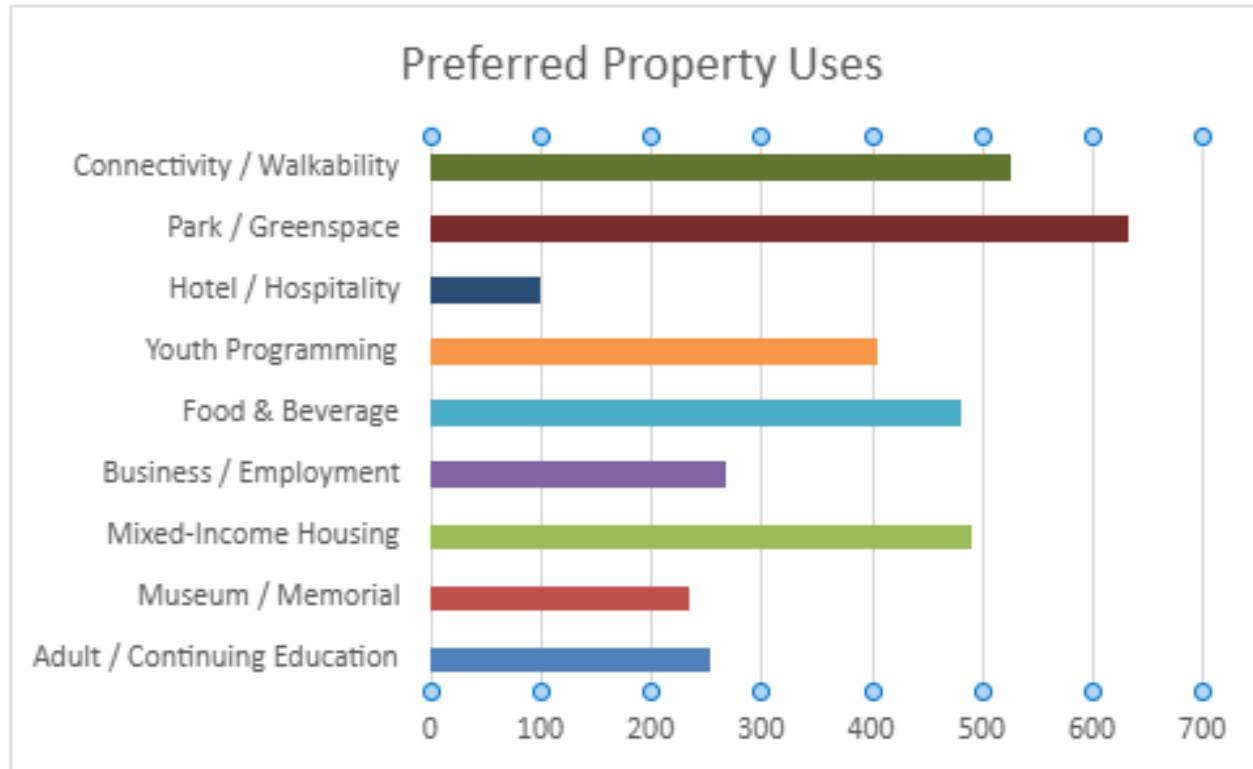


Provide DMD with information to guide future planning efforts and decision-making.

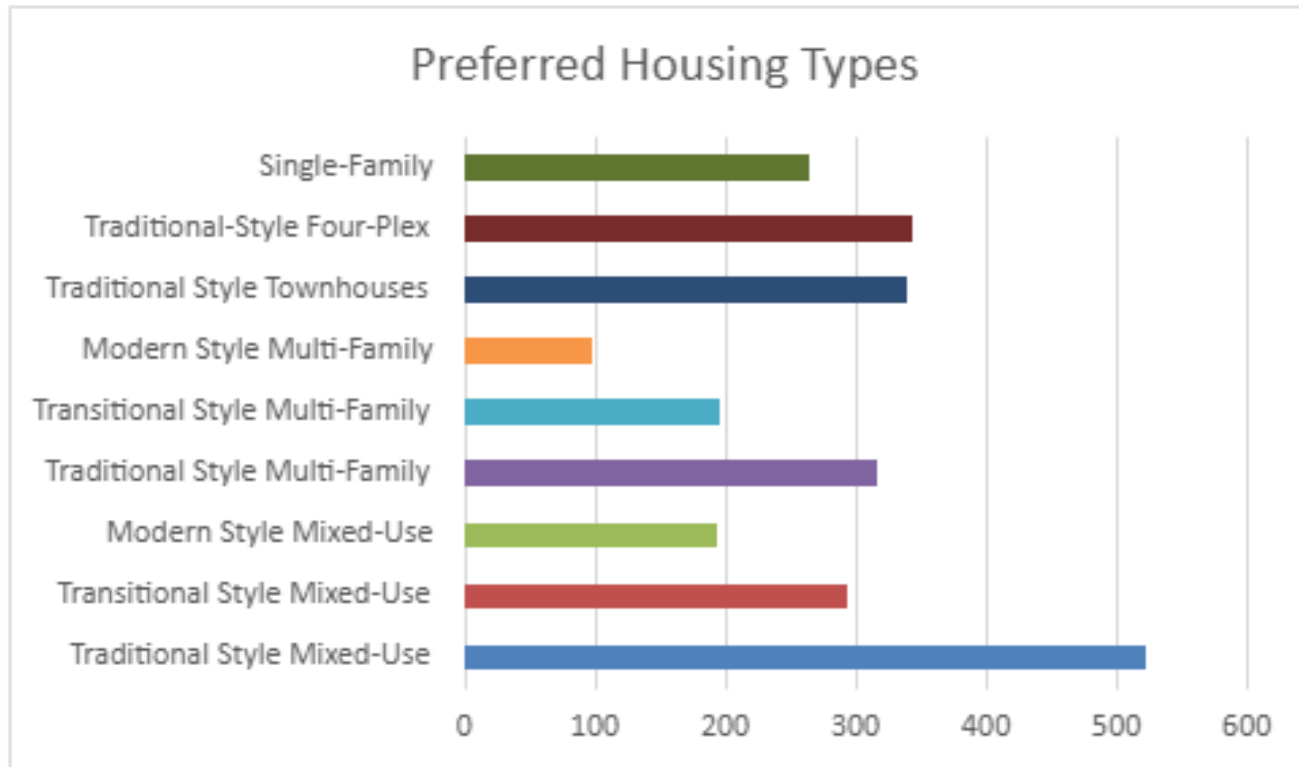


Inform subsequent steps, including the development of site concepts and the evaluation of potential development partners.

Preference Survey: Property Uses



Preference Survey: Housing



#2

HISTORIC
INDIANA
WOMEN'S PRISON

Preference Survey: MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

The Women's Prison site will be redeveloped with a variety of housing types in order to meet the needs of families, couples, and individuals of various income levels, lifestyles, and ages.

DIRECTIONS: Place dots on the 5 residential buildings below that most appeal to you:

MIXED-USE

Traditional Style Mixed-Use

A

Transitional Style Mixed-Use

B

Modern Style Mixed-Use

C

MULTI-FAMILY

Traditional Style Multi-Family

D

Transitional Style Multi-Family

E

Modern Style Multi-Family

F

LOWER DENSITY

Traditional Style Townhouses

G

Traditional Style Four-plex

H

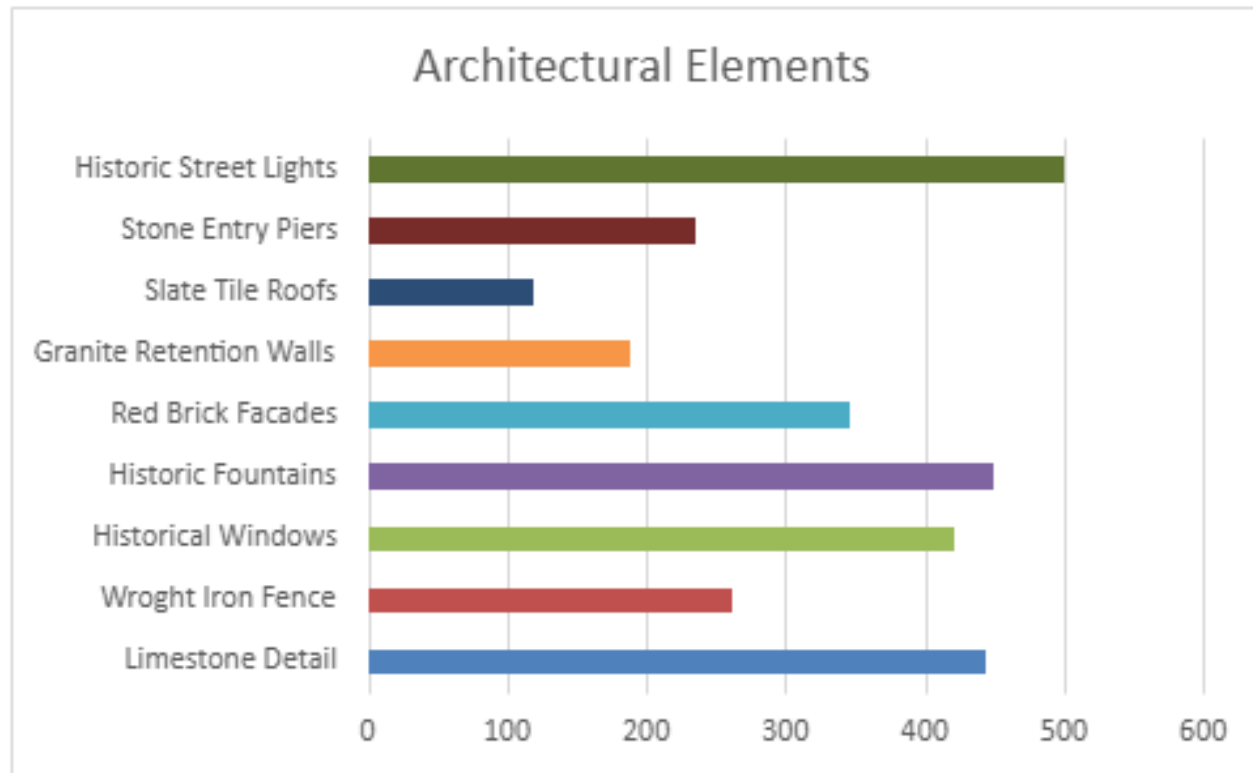
Single Family

I

GIVE US
YOUR
FEEDBACK
ONLINE

THE CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS

Preference Survey: Architectural Elements



#3 HISTORIC INDIANA WOMEN'S PRISON

Preference Survey: ARCHITECTURAL

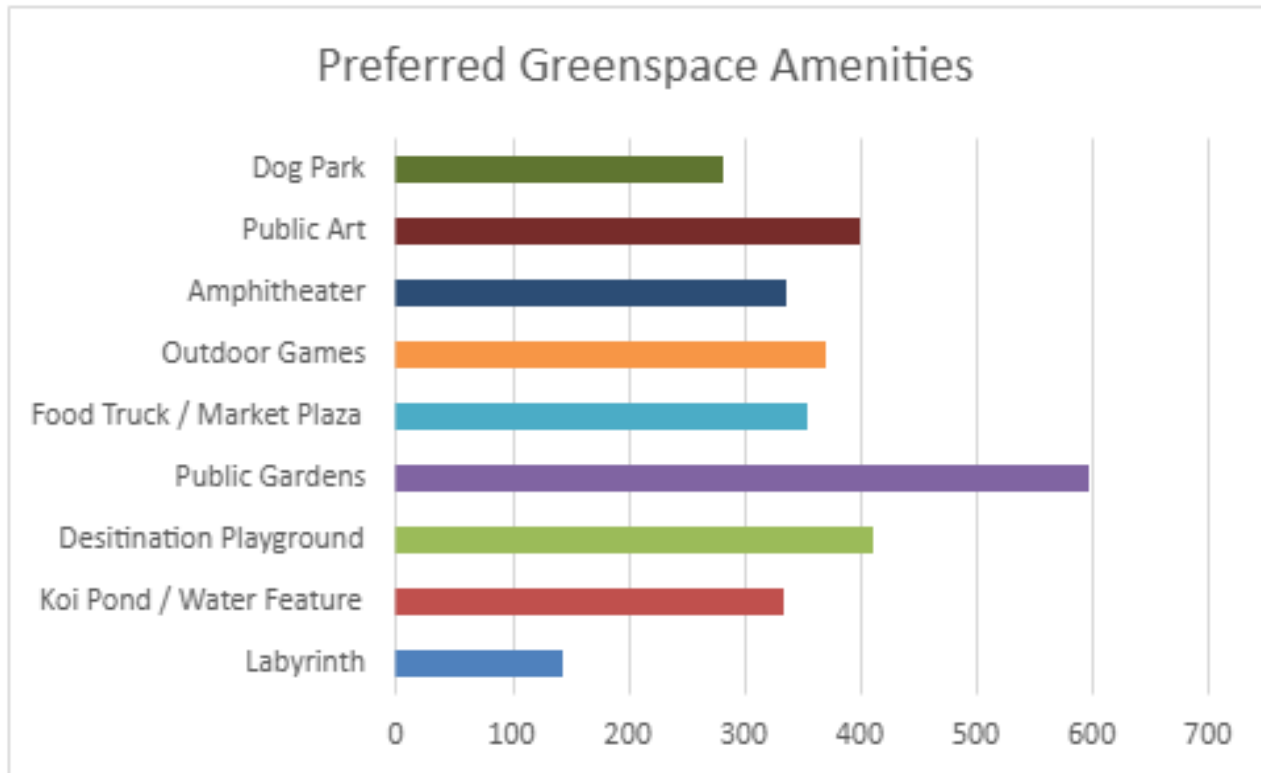
The Women's Prison property has a rich architectural history. Its redevelopment will draw inspiration from the campus itself as well as surrounding neighborhoods and the Arsenal Technical High School.

DIRECTIONS: Place dots on the 9 architectural elements that you think are most important.

Limestone Detail (A) | Wrought Iron Fence (Typical Example) (B) | Historic Windows (C)
 Historic Fountains (Woodruff Place) (D) | Red Brick Facades (E) | Granite Retention Walls (F)
 Slate Tile Roofs (G) | Stone Entry Piers (Woodruff Place) (H) | Historic Street Lights (I)

GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK ONLINE

Preference Survey: Greenspace Amenities



Preference Survey: We Heard

Create a walkable, community-centered destination

Strong support for greenspace, gathering spaces, and neighborhood amenities.

Promote mixed-use and mixed-income development

Preference for diverse housing options paired with retail and community-serving uses.

Honor neighborhood character and site history

Interest in architectural elements that reflect the Near Eastside and Woodruff Place, with varied perspectives on how the prison's history should be acknowledged.

Preference Survey: We Heard

Invest in spaces that serve residents of all ages

Support for family-friendly amenities, educational opportunities, and programs that strengthen community connections.

Prioritize equitable and sustainable redevelopment

Concerns about affordability, displacement, long-term maintenance, and ensuring current residents benefit from future investment.

Developer Roundtable: We Asked

What are the first factors you evaluate when considering a site with historic or legacy building?
What unknowns have the largest impact on feasibility?

What are the most common/impactful cost surprises in adaptive reuse?

Are Federal historic tax credits essential to making projects viable?

Which end uses tend to work best in historic structures like those on this property?

What financing tools have been most effective in making historic projects viable? What kinds of incentive gaps can make or break a historic redevelopment deal?

What operational challenges are unique to owning and managing preserved historic buildings?

What would make you more likely to take on a challenging historic site in today's market?

What does the city need to consider and provide during the disposition process?

What's one thing the public sector could do better to support the success of adaptive reuse projects?

Developer Roundtable: We Heard

Invest in Youth & Community Programs

Support for recreational opportunities, youth sports, and spaces that strengthen community connections.

Address Existing Site Conditions

Concerns were raised regarding the condition of buildings and site infrastructure, including tunnels and aging facilities.

Establish Strong Development Leadership

Many participants emphasized the importance of identifying an experienced master developer to guide implementation.

Developer Roundtable: We Heard

Take a Phased Approach

Preference for a **multi-year redevelopment strategy** that allows for thoughtful planning, community engagement, and adaptation over time.

Maintain Flexibility in Future Planning

Support for a redevelopment framework similar to other large-scale projects, allowing the vision to evolve as opportunities emerge.

Leverage Diverse Funding Strategies

Recognition that redevelopment will likely require a combination of incentives, partnerships, and creative financing tools

Balance Preservation with Practicality

A desire to honor the site's history while identifying realistic, cost-effective approaches for reusing or repurposing vacant spaces.

Site Environmental Status

- Received Comfort Letter & Environmental Restrictive Covenant (ERC) from Indiana Brownfields Program in March 2026
- Deed Restrictions:
 - No potable wells can be installed
- Reasonable Steps:
 - Two testing events for air quality required in buildings
 - Summer & Winter Sampling Events
 - Does not require rehabilitation of buildings prior to testing
 - Anticipate 1st Sampling Event to be Conducted Summer 2026

Structural Assessment

- **Evaluating Adaptive Reuse Viability:**
Providing technical data on the structural integrity of the campus to guide how to safely repurpose existing buildings (such as the former administration building or the prison chapel)
- **Determining Demolition Needs:**
Identifying which of the historically protected structures are too deteriorated to save, allowing the city to petition for demolition if necessary
- **Guiding Future Master Planning:**
Informing upcoming development plans, which community and advisory groups recommend should feature a mix of affordable and market-rate housing, vibrant public spaces, and preservation of the site's history.



Structural Assessment: Results

- **“Dorm 2”** is in the poorest condition
- No structural deficiencies identified
- Issues are primarily cosmetic
- Site-wide needs include:
 - Missing gutters
 - Concrete deterioration repairs
 - Brick tuckpointing



What This Means for Redevelopment

Reuse potential is limited without significant investment

- Buildings would require major capital rehabilitation to be made viable for new use

Likely redevelopment approach

- Selective preservation of historically or architecturally significant structures (e.g., chapel)
- Strategic reuse strategy

Key cost drivers

- Major upgrades to stormwater and drainage systems
- Extensive tuckpointing and concrete repair requirements

Overall implication

- Redevelopment feasibility is tied more to adaptive reuse strategy and funding capacity than existing building condition alone

Historic Preservation & Covenants

- Historic covenants (or preservation easements) are legal agreements attached to a property's deed that dictate how it can be modified, used, or developed.
- They ensure that historically significant architecture or features are protected long-term and bind all future owners to these preservation rules.



Historic Preservation & Covenants

Preserve Historic Character

Historic features must be restored, maintained, and preserved using established preservation standards

Ongoing Oversight

DHPA has the right to inspect the property to ensure covenant requirements are being followed

Restrictions Stay with the Property

The covenants remain in effect permanently and apply to all future owners of the property

Approval Required for Changes

Exterior changes to contributing historic buildings and major site modifications require approval from DHPA

Enforcement Authority

DHPA may pursue legal action to stop unauthorized work or require restoration if violations occur

Notification Requirements

DHPA must be notified of future sales, transfers, liens, or other encumbrances affecting the property

Historic Preservation & Covenants

What This Means in Practice

- Historically significant buildings cannot be altered or demolished without review and approval.
- Future redevelopment must balance preservation obligations with community and market goals.
- The preservation requirements transfer to any future owner or developer.
- These covenants help ensure that the site's historic significance is considered in all redevelopment decisions.

Historical Significance of the Women's Prison

- Based on the National Register of Historic Places Criteria, the property is significant in Social History, Politics and Government, and Architecture.
 - Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls opened in 1873, removing female inmates from the Indiana State Prison South in Clark County. It was the first women-only prison in the United States.
 - Works Progress Administration funds were used to construct new housing, a hospital, a chapel, and an administration building resulting in a quadrangle of Colonial Revival buildings assembled around a large, open lawn. A portion of the original 1870s iron fencing remains. The property is probably the largest and most complete New Deal project in Indianapolis.

Covenant Questions

- Who makes the decision at SHPO/DHPA regarding the historic covenants?
 - State law (IC 14-21-1-14) requires that before real property owned by the state may be sold or transferred, the Indiana Department of Administration (IDOA) must notify DHPA at least 90 days before the proposed transfer. The DHPA must advise IDOA of the location of any historic sites or structures on the property. IDOA will then reserve control of the historic property through a covenant or easement.
 - DHPA Staff is responsible for reviewing covenant compliance on the property once the covenant is in place.

Covenant Questions

- What is the process to remove the covenant?
 - The covenant would only be removed due to extenuating circumstances. Per the covenant language removal of the covenant is at the discretion of DHPA.

(8) The DHPA may, for good cause, modify or cancel any or all of the foregoing restrictions upon application of the grantee, its heirs, successors, or assigns.

Covenant Questions

- Is the opinion of the neighborhood considered when covenant review is being conducted?
 - While all factors impacting redevelopment of a property are taken under consideration during review, ultimately the covenant requires compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (the Standards), which is the basis for all determinations by DHPA staff.

(1) The grantee hereby covenants on behalf of itself, its heirs, successors and assigns at all time to restore, maintain and preserve this property in accordance with the recommended approaches of the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (National Park Service, 1992/1995) in order to preserve those qualities that make this property eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures.

Covenant Questions

- What exterior modifications can occur to remaining buildings? Can additions be constructed?
 - The Standards allow some exterior alterations to accommodate new use with prioritization of maintaining primary elevations and limiting alterations to secondary elevations as much as possible. Potential changes that could be approved may include:
 - Changing windows to doors to allow new entrances
 - Construction of additions on rear/side elevations if they are appropriately scaled/designed to limit visual impacts on the property as much as possible
 - Use of alternative, historically appropriate materials
 - Replacement of windows where the new windows accurately replicate the historic appearance

*final design approval is based on the cumulative impact of alterations on the property, so until final designs are submitted for review all comments are preliminary and should be considered general guidance

Covenant Questions

- Will any restrictions impact the ability to fill or modify the tunnel system to ensure any civil or structural engineering needs for new construction are met?
 - The tunnels are not considered significant historic architectural features and are not required to be retained in a functional condition.
 - Large scale ground disturbance could have archaeological concerns due to prior land use

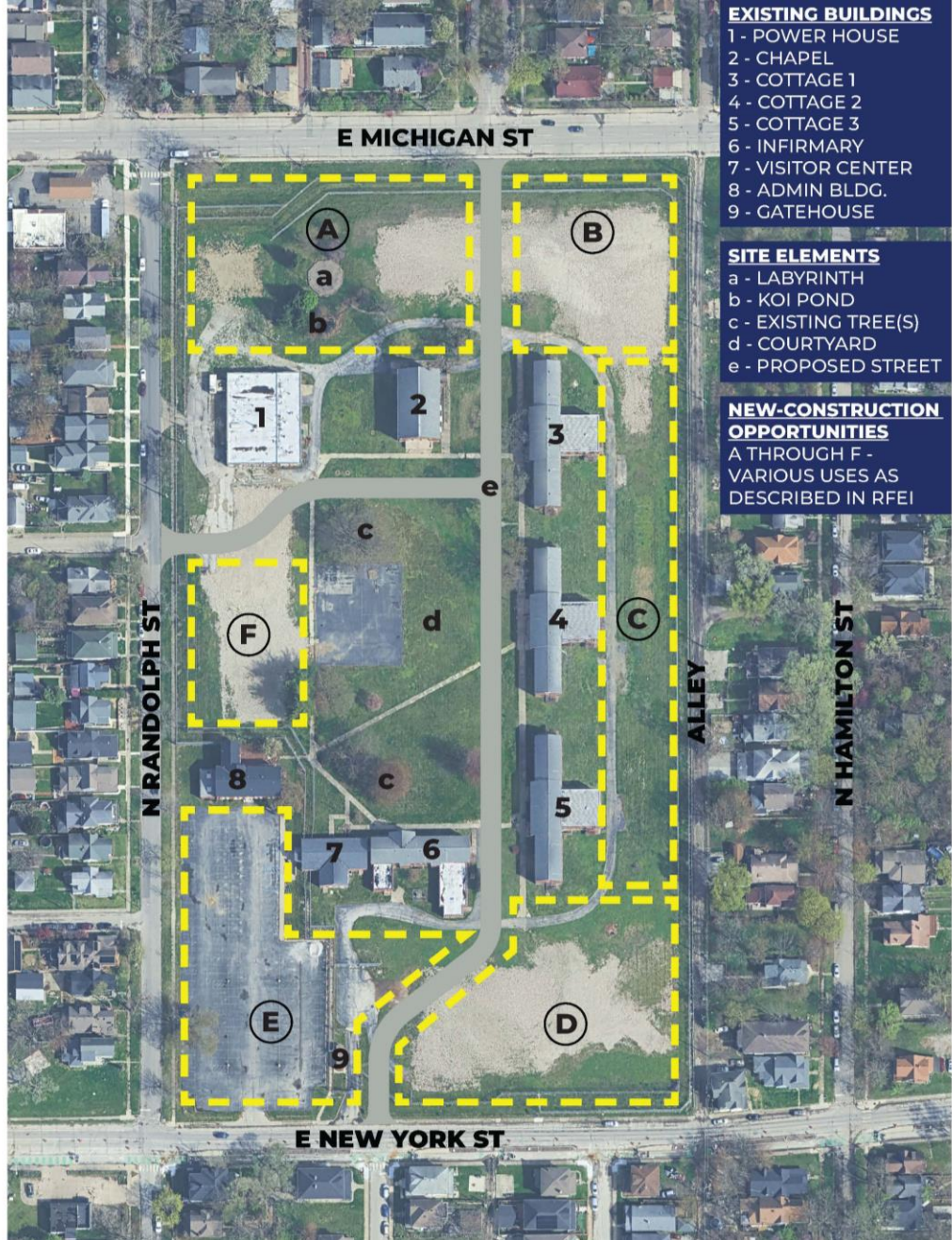
Covenant Questions

- Will demolition of the dormitory buildings be allowed?
 - Demolition of contributing buildings is not allowed under the Standards without substantial documentation to justify that there are no alternative options.
 - Infeasibility of rehabilitation to due structural deficiencies
 - Environmental contamination that does not allow safe occupancy of the buildings
 - Thorough documentation that every potential alternative has been explored and why none of them are feasible
 - Covenant review only applies to the exterior of the buildings so there is complete flexibility on interior alterations of the floor plans and use
 - This may change depending on funding sources being used on the rehabilitation, for example Federal Historic Tax Credits would trigger interior treatments to comply with the Standards in addition to the exterior requirements under the covenant

Central State Hospital Property – What's the difference?

- Why wasn't a covenant placed on the Central State property?
 - DHPA does hold a covenant on four of the buildings at Central State: the Old Pathology Building, the former administration building, the dining hall, and the laundry building.
- Why weren't they required to keep the patient residences?
 - The covenant was placed on the property in 2004 when it was transferred out of state ownership. Many of the buildings (including the original patient residences) were demolished during the 1970s, which was well before the hospital's closure in 1994. Any residences constructed post 1970 would not have been considered historic as of 2004 since they would have been well under 50-years old at the time.

Site Opportunities



Community Values & Redevelopment Goals

Honor

- Honor site history

Promote

- Promote equitable development

Encourage

- Encourage neighborhood investment

Expand

- Expand housing choices

Support

- Support economic opportunity

Enhance

- Enhance quality of life

Potential Opportunities

- Mixed-income housing
- Historic preservation
- Community gathering spaces
- Public open space
- Neighborhood-serving retail
- Workforce development programs
- Cultural or educational uses



Key Considerations

- Infrastructure needs
- Historic preservation requirements
- Financing considerations
- Environmental conditions
- Market realities
- Neighborhood compatibility



Honoring The Legacy

- Historical markers
- Public art installations
- Interpretive exhibits
- Memorial spaces
- Educational partnerships



Photo from 1916 of women feeding chickens

What Happens Next?

A **Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI)** is a tool used to gather ideas and gauge interest from potential development partners before a formal solicitation process begins.

Purpose of an RFEI

- Assess market interest and development capacity.
- Identify innovative ideas and potential site uses.
- Understand opportunities and challenges associated with the site.
- Gather feedback to help shape future redevelopment strategies.
- Inform the development of a potential future Request for Proposals (RFP).

Important to Note

- ❌ Not a commitment to select a developer
- ❌ Not a final development plan
- ❌ Not a contract or procurement award process

RFEI

Description	Date
RFEI Release Date:	June 17, 2026
Site Tours:	1:00 PM EST, Friday July 24, 2026 1:00 PM EST, Friday, August 7, 2026
Questions Due:	12:00 Noon EST, August 31, 2026
Addendum Issued:	Friday, September 11, 2026
EOI Submission Deadline:	12:00 Noon EST, September 30, 2026

Important to Note: Link to bid opportunities

<https://www.indy.gov/workflow/find-bid-opportunities>

Next Steps

RFEI Issuance

Potential: National Historic Register Application

Continued site plan refinement & feasibility review

Community Engagement

Housing Delivery Method & Activation Analysis

Summary

- Late December 2024 DMD took control of the property
- ULI TAP
- Community Stakeholder Working Group
- 2025 Community Preference Survey/Results
- Developer Roundtable/Results
- Site Visits
- Structural Assessment
- Environmental Assessment
- RFEI 6/17/2026
- Q4 Community Preference Survey with Q2 2027 Feedback and Information Session

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Email Inquiries
dmdengagement@indy.gov Subject Line: IWP

DMD Website:



[Indy.gov/DMD](https://indy.gov/DMD)

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Thank You

Together, we can honor this site's history while creating a vision that benefits current and future generations of Indianapolis residents.

