



KeepSpace unveils vision for Print Works

by Meri R. Kennedy

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PLANNING STAGES: Cranston Print Works and the surrounding area, pictured here, is in the planning stages for a KeepSpace community development project.

Planning is still in the beginning stages, but players in the KeepSpace project at Cranston Print Works have a brighter future in their sights.

“KeepSpace is about building community and about doing things differently,” said Mayor Allan Fung. “It’s not only about revitalizing just one neighborhood here or there. It’s about revitalizing all of Rhode Island.”

KeepSpace is an initiative of Rhode Island Housing that aims to create sustainable communities. Last month, KeepSpace representatives, along with Fung and Print Works, invited Cranston residents and businesses to provide input on proposed uses of the Cranston Print Works site, a key component of the KeepSpace Community Design for the Knightsville/Arlington area.

“We understand that KeepSpace is a new concept and with that comes many questions,” said Scott Wolf, KeepSpace founding partner and Advisory Committee member.

Approximately 50 people met at Sprague Mansion to share their thoughts. At that meeting, residents spoke about maintaining the character of the community and keeping homes

affordable to community members, while also keeping prices comparable to other local properties.

The working group for KeepSpace, which was formed last spring, focused on protecting and revitalizing Cranston Print Works as well as other historic assets in the area, reconnecting these areas to the rest of the community and providing local access to open space and the Pocasset River.

Rhode Island Housing has committed \$10 million in funding for the first four KeepSpace communities in Rhode Island, slated for Cranston, Providence, Pawtucket/Central Falls and Westerly.

Rhode Island Housing is funding the current outreach and engagement process. Through KeepSpace's partnership with other agencies and organizations those funds will be leveraged.

In fact, the Department of Environmental Management has already awarded a brownfield mitigation grant for the Print Works location.

The initial proposal for Cranston Print Works, as part of the bigger KeepSpace Community Design, involves renovating the building into a multi-functional community.

Throughout the course of the summer, additional working group meetings were held to examine how the six KeepSpace Elements: good homes, a healthy environment, strong commerce, sensible infrastructure, positive community impact and integrated arts, culture, recreation and religion would be worked into the community.

“Everything we do here in Cranston will be sustainable for the long term so that our children and our children’s children can enjoy the community the way we did,” Fung said.

Also involved in the KeepSpace initiative are George Shuster, chairman and CEO of Cranston Print Works; David Twombly, principal of Twombly Consulting and J. Michael Abbot, principal of Newport Collaborative Architects.

The plan incorporates opening access to the Pocasset River, pond and waterfall by extending the bike path up to the waterfall and adding a fishing pier and public canoe and kayak launch.

The creation of live/work spaces within the complex will feature affordable housing, but will not classify as Section 8. The apartments would be a mix of one- and two-bedroom spaces, supplemented by modest single-family homes designed to blend with the existing character of the community.

"Unlike in many other mill restoration projects, we intend to stay here," said Shuster of the Cranston Print Works management. "We have a vested interest in both Cranston Print Works and the neighborhood as a whole. This initiative allows us to continue our tradition of having a strong commitment to Cranston and its residents."

Wolf envisions a connected, traditional neighborhood that allows families to safely walk the streets in a clean environment.

"Although this is indeed a new approach to building community, it is actually more of a 'back to the future' approach to creating traditional, energetic, resilient neighborhoods," he said.

More community meetings will be scheduled in the weeks to come.

To learn more about KeepSpace, visit www.keepspace.org or contact Amy Rainone at 457-1256 or by e-mail at arainone@keepspace.org.