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Proposals Sought for Allentown State Hospital Land Purchase

By Colin McEvoy

ALLENTOWN - An image of the former Allentown State Hospital property as featured in a reuse feasibility study about the area. (image courtesy State of Pennsylvania)

The state of Pennsylvania is seeking proposals for the purchase of developable land at the former Allentown State Hospital property.

The Pennsylvania Department of General Services (DGS) is currently accepting proposals for the purchase of 195.2 acres at the former hospital site located at 1600 Hanover Avenue in Allentown.

More information about the project and how to submit proposals can be found here. Inquiries can be directed to Andrew Lick of the Department of General Services at 717-772-8842 or alick@pa.gov.

Proposals are due by May 18. The state is seeking mixed-use proposals for the site with various conditions. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive any defect, or negotiate for better terms.

The Allentown State Hospital is a former psychiatric hospital that closed in 2010 after nearly a century in operation. It has long been discussed as a possible redevelopment site, and a reuse feasibility study was conducted in 2020 by Michael Baker International at the request of the city of Allentown.

"It's exciting to move one step closer to seeing the former Allentown State Hospital site become an asset for our community," said Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk. "There are few opportunities of this magnitude for real estate development in the Lehigh Valley and it's even rarer to find them in a city like Allentown. It'll be transformative for our city – and create much needed commercial space in our region."

The study was funded through a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Assessment Grant received by the Lehigh Valley Land Recycling Initiative (LVLRI), the redevelopment program of the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC). LVLRI and LVEDC also selected Michael Baker International to perform the study.

This reuse feasibility study, which is available online, provides potential reuse options for the site ahead of applications to purchase the property. Demolition and remediation activities at the site began in July 2020, according to the state.

"It's not very often that a site of this size becomes available for smart redevelopment in the midst of an existing urban neighborhood and commercial corridor," said LVEDC President & CEO Don Cunningham. "The state is seeking creative proposals and working in accordance with community leaders to hopefully find a qualified developer that can make this property productive once again."

Spanning about 195 acres, the Allentown State Hospital site represents the largest site available for development in the city. Prior to demolition plans, the property included 44 buildings that were part of the hospital campus.

Solicitation for proposals for the property will be overseen by the Act 71 Committee, named after the bill signed by Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf which established a process for disposition of the Allentown State Hospital site.

The Act 71 Committee includes LVEDC President & CEO Don Cunningham, state Sen. Patrick M. Browne, state Rep. Mike Schlossberg, Allentown Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Scott Unger, representatives of the city of Allentown, and the Secretary of the Pennsylvania DGS, according to the reuse feasibility study.

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