

Notes from the September 4, 2007 Meeting of the East Campus Redevelopment Community Review Steering Committee

Introduction

Doug Duncan opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and explained again why the meeting schedule had to be adjusted (while acknowledging that this may have engendered distrust for this process, it was done to accommodate all of the feedback received at the August 13 meeting).

Bob Peck then reviewed some background points for the committee.

- The purpose of the project: to create a vibrant mixed-use development; act as a springboard for revitalization of the Route 1 corridor; and attract outstanding students and employees to the University.
- Ground rules:
 - Everyone should pay attention to and show courtesy to whoever is speaking and respect for his or her views;
 - In the interest of continuity, Committee members are asked to make every effort to make every meeting and substitutes are not allowed. There is a lot of material to cover and it is difficult to get through it and make decisions if people miss parts of the presentations and discussions; and
 - While the public is invited to observe the Committee meetings, only Committee members are permitted to ask questions and participate in discussions, again in the interest of conducting and concluding a dialogue effectively. Committee members are encouraged to gather questions and points of views from their friends, neighbors or constituencies.
- Materials for the meeting were posted on the East Campus website (www.eastcampus.umd.edu) as of the previous Friday. For future meetings, we will try to post materials a week before the meeting.
- The University is taking notes and we acknowledge that the committee is free to tape the meeting and take their own notes.
- Mission Statement and Goals: Bob will follow up with the people who had comments on these, and we will post any changes on the website.

Discussion

Introduction

Presentation (Richard Perlmutter)

- Quick overview of the agenda, with explanation that the topics and issues account for the feedback received at the August 13 meeting

Existing Conditions

Presentation (Jon Eisen)

- There are several significant site constraints: an underground utility (high pressure gas line), fuel tanks, and the power plant. These help determine the layout of the planned road network.
- We are embracing adjacent assets: large public open spaces (which limit the need for similar spaces in this project) and neighborhoods. We plan to integrate the project into the urban grid.
- This is mostly an industrial site.
- There is more of a grade than most people think.
- We will also embrace site assets, such as Ritchie Coliseum and the power plant.
- We will use urban design guidelines based on existing conditions and consideration of edge conditions.

Q&A

- Question: What is the current zoning for this site?
 - Response: It was rezoned MUI in 2002 as part of the Sector Plan.
- Question: How old are the gas and steam lines?
 - Response: They were installed in 2003. They will be in a right-of-way so replacement will not be a problem.
- Question: Would having a light rail on top of these lines be a problem for replacement?
 - Response: No; this is a standard situation for light rail.
 - Follow-up question: But wouldn't having to tear up rail affect WMATA's decision on the Purple Line?
 - Response: No; this is not a unique situation and would not preclude the Purple Line.
- Question: What existing conditions give you extra heartburn?
 - Response: The site's grade, proximity to single family neighborhoods and landfill are significant issues, but these are common conditions. The most unusual condition is the power plant.
- Question: Is there a standard regarding setbacks for fuel tanks?
 - Response: This is still being investigated.
- Question: How old are the fuel tanks?
 - Response: One was installed in 2003 and the other was refurbished in 2003.

Power Plant – Noise

Presentation (Hasan Askari)

- We have hired a consultant to analyze power plant noise and make recommendations on how to mitigate it.
- Interior noise is currently 60-100 decibels; we need to get this down to 50-60 decibels (the exterior standard has not yet been determined).
- Noise will be controlled through design and materials.

Q&A

- Question: These noise standards are for average noise levels – what about peak noise?

- Response: This will be addressed too. The consultant will work with the architect. Also, noise is one of the many issues that will be part of M-NCPPC's Detailed Site Plan review.

Power Plant – Safety and Emissions

Presentation (Scott Lupin)

- Suez runs the plant and is responsible for safety; there have not been any problems.
- On emissions/air quality:
 - We operate under an air quality permit through the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and EPA.
 - The permit sets emissions limits for the plant.
 - The plant burns oil and natural gas, but very little oil (which is dirtier) is burned at this point.
 - Suez calculates plant emissions on a daily basis using actual fuel consumption data and known emission rates, and we send a quarterly report to MDE and EPA.
 - The plant performs well below its emissions limits (50% to 90% below).
 - The plant recently received an Energy Star award in recognition of its cogeneration function (it generates both electricity and heat).

Q&A

- Question: You talked about occupational safety; what about safety for other people outside of the plant?
 - Response: There are already people and buildings near the plant, and there have been no problems.
- Question: How does the plant perform regarding other pollutants?
 - Response: The plant is 94% below limits for organic pollutants.

College Park Airport – Flight Path Restrictions

Presentation (Bill Shipp)

- There are two regulatory bodies involved: Maryland Aviation Administration and FAA.
- This site is in MAA Aviation Policy Area zone 6, the least restrictive zone.
- Any project near an airport must participate in a notice process: these regulatory bodies review the project (height and massing) and comment on it if necessary (and update their maps).
- There are other recent, local projects in zone 6, including the NOAA building at M Square (under construction), the North Gate hotel (planning) and University View (built).
- This is an established, standard process and County requirement. We don't anticipate any problems.

Q&A

- Comment: There is a funneling effect from the accumulation of all the recent projects – if there is too much impact this project should not occur.

- Response: This is the purpose of the regulatory reviews.
- Question: Have you studied in detail the project plan in relationship to the rules yet?
 - Response: No, in part because we are very early in the planning process. We may have FAA do a pre-review to help define project constraints. By the way, this issue is also part of the Detailed Site Plan review.
- Comment: This may limit the height of the hotel.
 - Response: We do not expect there to be an issue concerning the height of the hotel, but we will address any comments received and we will comply.

Floodplain, Storm Drainage and Water & Sewer

Presentation (Mark Morelock)

- Floodplain
 - This site is close to but almost entirely outside of the 100-year floodplain as it is currently drawn.
 - We believe that the floodplain limits, as shown, are conservative in terms of how much of the site is in the floodplain. This is because the floodplain maps pre-date the construction of Paint Branch Parkway.
 - Small amounts of fill will be needed for the few pockets of floodplain on the site, which will be offset by small cuts elsewhere.
- Storm Drainage
 - There are several existing drains and outfalls on and around this site.
 - We will have to shift slightly a major pipe that runs east-west through the site to follow the planned road.
 - We will also enhance the network under the site.
 - We will meet all MDE regulations for redevelopment sites (addressing issues such as recharge, water quality, channel protection and flood protection).
 - A Concept Stormwater Management Plan will be developed and submitted to Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPWT) for approval.
- Water & Sewer
 - We intend to use existing lines under Route 1 and Paint Branch Parkway.
 - Our initial investigation has not discovered any capacity issues with those two lines; however, we may have to upgrade capacity on other lines.
 - As part of the design process, we will need to prepare a hydraulic planning analysis for review and approval by WSSC.

Q&A

- Question: What is recharge?
 - Response: This is the replenishment of groundwater. A recharge system will not be needed here because the site is defined as redevelopment and therefore it is not required.
- Question: What will be the storm water effect on the Old Town area?
 - Response: This will be addressed through the DPWT process, and we may end up actually improving the existing system.
- Question: What about sediment control?

- Response: Prince George's County requires approval of a sediment control plan. This will be submitted to Prince George's Soil Conservation District for review and approval.
- Question: There are many projects in the works; will the cumulative impact of these on sewer & water be accounted for?
 - Response: Yes, the WSSC review accounts for all projects occurring in the same timeframe.
- Question: Are you investigating the use of bioremediation for runoff?
 - Response: We have not done so yet; most facilities will be structural.

Brownfield Conditions

Presentation (Richard Perlmutter)

- Phase 1 and II environmental site assessments have been completed for both the project site and Metzert Road landfill site.
- There are numerous landfill spots, with materials including construction debris, fly ash and solid waste.
- This material is required to be removed by EPA.
- This is a financial issue, but not a safety/health concern.

Q&A

- Question: The previous RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act) permit from EPA was issued in 1991; was a new one issued in 2007?
 - Response: Yes.

Relocation Facilities and Sites

Presentation (Hasan Askari)

- Four Relocation Facilities have been identified by University of Maryland:
 - East Campus
 - Wooded Hillock
 - Parking Lot 4i
 - Metzert Landfill
- Who is moving to these locations?
 - East Campus
 - Pokomoke Building: Mail Facility, Public Safety (Police), Environmental Facility
 - Facilities Group (Facilities, O&M Offices) will move to a New Building on East Campus
 - Wooded Hillock: O&M Shops and Offices, Motor Pool
 - Parking Lot 4i: DoTS Shops and Offices (ShuttleUM Operations)
 - Metzert Landfill: Landscape Services

Q&A

- Comment: The Pocomoke Building should be used as a link (for example, with retail uses) from the project site to the downtown area.
 - Response: There are a few reasons why this currently is not the plan: 1) the current proposed use is a response to the University's requirements; 2) the façade is not conducive to retail; and 3) the plan is more to use the sidewalk as the link through new design and amenities. However, this is an idea worth exploring and we will do that.
- Question: The University's Master Plan suggests that Pocomoke was recently renovated; did that occur?
 - Response: The renovation plans were not executed.

Accessibility

Presentation (Jon Eisen)

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was first enacted in 1990. It was updated in 1994, and it is being revised again currently. A new law is supposed to be passed within the next year.
- We will design to the new regulations.
- There is no program yet so it is too early to say how ADA will be accommodated, but this is a standard process and one we embrace.
- The regulations will apply to all buildings in this project.

Q&A

- Comment: Brick can be difficult to traverse for people in wheelchairs.
 - Response: If brick pavers are used, the issue is usually more about buckling than slipperiness; we address this by laying down asphalt below the brick.
- Comment: The graduate housing should include accessible units.
 - Response: ADA requires this.

Sustainable Design

Presentation (Jon Eisen)

- Sustainable design involves design and construction practices that significantly reduce or eliminate the negative impact of buildings on the environment and occupants.
- We and the developer both use sustainable design techniques, though not necessarily using the LEED process, which is a specific, point-based system with significant fees.
- LEED credits fall into five categories: indoor environmental quality, sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy & atmosphere, and materials & resources.
- We can't say at this early stage what specific sustainable processes and materials will be used for this project.
- The architect, StreetSense, is LEED-certified.
- We have already received a recognition award from the Washington Smart Growth Alliance for this project.

Q&A

- Question: Will you seek LEED certification?
 - Response: We don't know yet, but we will meet the criteria (we are capable of doing our own scoring).
- Question: Can you give examples of other projects the architect or developer has done that have used sustainable design practices?
 - Response: StreetSense is involved in a LEED-ND pilot project in Gaithersburg, MD.
 - Foulmer-Pratt built the new Nature Conservancy headquarters in Arlington, VA.
- Comments:
 - This is a major opportunity to be an environmental leader.
 - It would be great PR for the project and all parties involved.
 - It would help the University with its plans of ascension.
 - This is also an opportunity to improve town-gown relations.
 - We should seek to set standards, not just follow them.
 - The Facilities Master Plan requires LEED Silver for new construction. [*Response after meeting: this is not the case; the Master Plan only encourages seeking LEED certification and does not mention a specific level.*]
 - Existing University commitments should be considered a starting point for this project.
 - Sustainable design also improves quality of life.
 - Environmental planning needs to take into account transportation decisions as well.
- General responses: These are all valid points. Also, this project will be scored, and the scoring process will be transparent.

Other Issues

Bob Peck asked if anyone had other questions or issues that they wanted to raise.

- Question: To help committee members collect feedback from the community, can we devote the first 15 minutes of future meetings to this?
 - Response: That is a good idea and we will do that.
- Question: Can we use a larger space for future meetings?
 - Response: We will look into this.
- Comment: [A couple people expressed appreciation for this community participation effort, noting that many development projects do not offer these kinds of opportunities.]
- Comment: Since you have made clear that this project will go through the standard County development review process, we should spend some time reviewing the process.
 - Response: This is one of the topics for the October 22 meeting.
- Question: There won't be many details known about the project by the time this committee finishes its meetings – how can the public be involved after that?
 - Response: The regulatory process offers opportunities for public involvement. Bill Shipp will put together a summary of this process and it will be posted on the website on the October 22 meeting page.

- Follow-up comment: The standard regulatory process does not always produce the best project; you should consider going beyond this process.
 - Response: This is a good point and we will evaluate it.