

East Campus Redevelopment Community Review Steering Committee Notes from the January 28, 2008 Meeting

Introduction

Doug Duncan opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

Bryant Foulger then expressed the developer's appreciation for all of the Committee's efforts and input and thanked the Committee for this work. He concluded by saying that he hoped that all people and parties involved would be proud of the outcome.

The meeting was then opened to the Committee to raise questions and comments on any outstanding issues. No issues were raised.

Discussion

Note: The presentation portions of each meeting topic largely follow the presentation slides. Printouts of the slides were available at the meeting and will be posted on the project website, so these notes will not reproduce all of the information they contain but will instead focus on any additional information that was provided by the presenter and the Q&A segments that followed each topic.

The Purple Line, the Campus Master Plan and the 2007 Update to the Plan

Presentation (Frank Brewer, Associate Vice President for Facilities Management for the University of Maryland)

[This topic was presented in response to a question from the previous meeting. At that meeting, the MTA consultant explained that the University had asked MTA to study another alternative, the Preinkert Drive/Chapel Drive route. It was stated that a significant amount of planned development activity, both on-campus and off-campus, was planned for this area in connection with the Master Plan and private development projects. The following presentation was made in order to provide some information about this planned activity.]

- The 2007 update was presented to the Board of Regents last Thursday (January 24) and is awaiting the Board's approval.
- Planning Goals: The major planning goals remain the same as in the original 2000-2020 Plan.
- Planning Initiatives:
 - Housing: 6,200 total new beds projected over the next several years (University, PPP and private projects).
 - Facilities Renewal: There is a significant backlog of work to be done.
 - Sustainability:
 - There is a growing emphasis on this.
 - Examples include: the Presidents Climate Commitment, work on how to utilize renewable energy sources, increased recycling, incorporating this into curricula (teaching and research), and regional efforts such as one addressing the Anacostia Watershed.

- A map was presented showing the Plan's 2020 vision, with 10-minute walk circles around each of the three planned stations on campus, based on the Preinkert Drive alignment.
 - This alignment would help close the planned internal shuttle loop, creating an efficient internal circulation system.

Q&A

- Question: Does Presidents Climate Commitment include M Square and East Campus?
 - Response: The University's general policy is that the University has to have control over the energy use to include the activity in this commitment. However, East Campus will be included.
 - [A brief description of the commitment was provided. See <http://www.umd.edu/umnews/acupcc.html> or <http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org/> for details.]
- Question: On the map, what are the planned buildings north of the Byrd Stadium?
 - Response: Currently these are holding blocks, but they will likely be some combination of undergraduate housing and parking.
- Question: 2,000 beds are assumed for the Knox Box redevelopment; when is this project predicted to be completed, and how likely is it?
 - Response: The owner of most of this land is actively working on this. It could be open as soon as 2011.
- Question: With traffic studies, projects that are planned but not yet approved are not included in the analysis; does it make sense to include these projects in the Purple Line analysis?
 - Response: The Purple Line won't be built for 15 or more years, so it makes sense to account for these projects.
- Question: One goal of the Master Plan is to improve pedestrian circulation in the campus core. Then why not place the Purple Line there, and why not improve pedestrian circulation outside of the core?
 - Response: The University wants both; it's a question of how to achieve all of this.
- Question: Is the plan to shut Campus Drive between the Union and the M to auto traffic accounted for in this Plan update?
 - Response: The update does not address the Purple Line, but the update does recommend establishing an internal shuttle loop and restricting auto access.
- Question: What metrics are used to measure energy use in the update?
 - Response: University energy consumption is measured in kilowatts (electricity), MMBTUs (gas) and M lbs (steam). Energy consumption performance is measured by comparing current energy consumption with historical consumption.
- Question: Has a LEED standard been added for this update?
 - Response: The campus has established a standard of LEED Silver for all new building construction and major renovations.
- Comments: The Preinkert Drive alternative does not serve the greatest campus population.
 - Response: MTA is studying this and the Campus Drive alternative, and will come back with some results in February.
- Comment: The latest MTA pedestrian counts should wait until the weather is better to be more accurate.
 - Response: We would have to wait a few months to do this.

- Response [Garth]: Counts account for this issue.
- Comment: The map presented should have shown all three Purple Line alternatives that are being considered, not just the Preinkert Drive alignment.
 - Response: Facilities Management was asked to provide what was presented.

[The rest of the meeting addressed a series of topics related to the principles, each of which was led by Bob Peck. These topics did not have a PowerPoint element. For the next two topics (History and Context, Introduction), Bob gave some information then led the q&a.]

History and Context

- Project Benefits [This is a document that was presented on the screen. It will be posted on the website.]
 - This project is an opportunity to accomplish many important things for this area.
- Project background [See website for more details.]
 - An RFP was released in September, 2006. The developer team was selected in January, 2007.
 - The site is located in a borderline real estate market.
 - This committee was formed and had its first meeting five months ago, in August, 2007.
 - Committee Mission and Goals [This is a document that was presented on the screen. It was posted on the website at the outset of the Committee process.]
- This has been one of the most participatory and detailed community processes Bob has seen in 25 years of experience he has had in several roles.
- Purpose of the principles: Early in this process, Doug realized that creating a list of guiding principles that all parties could agree to would be very helpful.
- The draft that was sent to the Committee Friday took account feedback from the Committee that was still being received late last week.

Introduction

- The document has 4 opening bullets, which are high-level statements of intent.
- Upcoming project schedule: The University and developer are nearing completion on the General Development Agreement (GDA). The developer needs to start making progress on financing and entitlements. The plan is to break ground in 1 year, and to open the first phase in mid-2010. No detailed work on design or leasing has begun yet; these are among the next steps that must get started.
- It is not possible at this early stage to commit to detailed strategies for achieving the higher-level principles.
- The plan is to return to the Committee at later stages of the design process.

Q&A

- Question: To bring some sense of the importance of financial viability of the project, what are the project stress points in relationship to these principles? With the real estate market having changed dramatically in the last year, do you still consider this project to be financially feasible?

- Response [Bryant Foulger]: The market *has* changed, and many projects have fallen apart. Any principles or strategies that are restrictions or have additional costs are stress points. However, FP/A still considers this project viable. We are encouraged by the tenant interest to date. The current cycle hopefully will turn around before East Campus opens.
- Response [Doug]: As an example of the effects of the changing market, the Mazza Grandmarc graduate student housing project was recently approved by the County Council, but now the owners are considering selling rather than developing the property.
- Response [Bob Peck]: This site does have several important geographic advantages, including being near a Metro station, inside the Beltway and adjacent to a major employer.
 - Follow-up comment: East Campus is a better project than most in this county. Feasibility is an important element; perhaps it should be one of the principles.

[The final two topics (Principles, Strategies) covered the contents of the principles document sent to the Committee prior to the meeting; these sections consisted entirely of q&a and were led by Bob, with many responses provided by the developer.]

The Principles

- Design
 - Question: There is nothing in this statement that makes it clear that the design will be different from the images that have been presented during these meetings. Is the University committed to a design that is compatible with the area?
 - Response: The phrase, “appropriate development character” addresses this issue.
 - Follow-up question: Does the University have final say over design?
 - Response: Yes.
 - Response: The design should go beyond being compatible; it should elevate the local standards. The language in this principle reflects this.
- Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability [No questions raised.]
- Smart Growth, Transportation and Parking [No questions raised.]
- Uses
 - Question: How can “high-quality” be defined? Does the developer consider Dave & Buster’s high-quality?
 - Response: No.
- Project Initiatives and Resources
 - Question: How will this principle be evaluated in terms of measuring outcomes?
 - Response: This will require looking at the specific strategies used.
 - Question: Does “community awareness” mean creating a sense of community or involving the community?
 - Response: Both.
- General
 - Comment: Some of the language is tentative.
 - Response: Point taken; some verbs will be changed to reflect solid commitment.

- Question: Having only received this document Friday, there was not enough time before this meeting to gather community feedback. What are the expectations for tonight's meeting?
 - Response [Doug]: The plan is to wordsmith the document tonight, then let Committee members take this to their communities for feedback, and then have a final follow-up meeting.
 - Follow-up comment: Strategies will evolve over the life of this project, as situations and issues change. It won't be possible to lock in specific strategies now for the life of this project.
 - Response [other Committee member]: True, but the strategies are important because they are where the details are.
- Question: Does the Prince George's District Council have final say over approval of this project?
 - Response Yes.

The Strategies

- Design – second strategy
 - Question: Can this be made more precise in terms of the University review process?
 - Response: Yes, we will work on this.
 - Please describe the Architectural Design Standards Board (ADSB) and what it does.
 - Response: ADSB develops design guidelines for campus architecture and landscaping, assures campus aesthetic quality and design coherence, and reviews the design of new facilities and renovation projects. Members include the Dean of the School of Architecture, faculty from Landscape Architecture, Horticulture and other departments, the Director of Facilities Planning, and others. There are about 12 members in all.
- Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability – general
 - Question: A couple of these strategies include the phrase “to the extent feasible” – does this include financially feasible?
 - Response: Yes.
- Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability – first strategy
 - Question: Why are standards other than LEED mentioned? Why “benchmark”?
 - Response: There is no LEED rating system for residential, and the LEED-ND system will not be available in time (the systems need to be chosen early in the design process). “Benchmark” is a standard term used with these kinds of rating systems.
 - Question: This strategy needs to be consistent with (no less stringent than) the Master Plan; is it?
 - Response: We will make sure it is.
 - Comments: Green building may cost more upfront but has financial benefits on an ongoing basis.
 - Response: Yes, and this is why we have to find the right balance.
 - Comment: Most of the community wants a standard higher than LEED Silver.
 - Response: LEED Silver or equivalent standard is what the University is requiring.

- Question: Is the requirement to achieve LEED Silver status, or actual certification?
 - Response: The former. Certification is expensive and not even possible for LEED-ND. Note that the developer has hired a green consultant (even though the architecture firm has many LEED certified professionals and experience).
- Comment: Public subsidies mean the public should be able to require a higher LEED standard.
 - Response: Silver *is* a higher standard.
 - Follow-up question: How much public funding is expected for this project?
 - Response: 20% of the total cost.
 - Follow-up comment: That's a significant amount.
 - Response: It is a low proportion relative to similar projects in the metro area.
- Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability – second strategy
 - Question: Does the new state law regarding storm water management apply?
 - Response: Yes. The project will conform to all local, state and federal laws.
- Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability – general
 - Question: A couple of these strategies include the phrase “to the extent feasible” – does this include financially feasible?
 - Response: Yes.
 - Question: A strategy of utilizing green roofs was suggested; why was this not included?
 - Response: Some buildings can support these and some (wood frame) can't.
 - Question: Strategies of using renewable energy and building orientation were suggested; why were these not included?
 - Response: These are too early and specific at this stage. The LEED scoring process allows flexibility in which credits are earned to achieve a particular certification level.
 - Follow-up question: So have these been rejected, or is just not possible to commit to them at this stage?
 - Response: The latter. This applies to all or almost all Committee-recommended strategies that are not included in the principles document.
 - Question: A strategy of encouraging water conservation was suggested; why was this not included?
 - Water conservation: This was included.
- Smart Growth, Transportation and Parking – first strategy
 - Comment: The strategy is to reduce automobile traffic. The parking analysis indicates that 5,700 spaces are needed (4,000 for Phase I, 1,700 for Phase II) – this seems high.
 - Response: It is below the amount that would be generated using various standards. And keep in mind that all parking will be paid.
- Smart Growth, Transportation and Parking – second strategy
 - Question: What about conformance with other, local (College Park) studies, which have recommendations related to TDM?
 - Response: SHA plans are what the developer needs to follow. College Park supports the SHA plans.
- Smart Growth, Transportation and Parking – third strategy
 - Comment: This should also refer to bike connections to adjacent areas.

- Response: This will be addressed as part of the first strategy.
- Smart Growth, Transportation and Parking – fourth strategy
 - “To help alleviate traffic on Route 1” should be added to this.
 - Response: This is addressed in the first strategy.
- Smart Growth, Transportation and Parking – twelfth strategy
 - Comment: Please add that MAA regulations will also be met.
 - Response: Done.
- Smart Growth, Transportation and Parking – general
 - Question: A strategy of creating a reserve fund for traffic calming was suggested; why was this not included?
 - Response: The developer has already committed to improving intersections, as part of Phase II. Traffic calming should be a public obligation, paid for through the increased tax revenues derived from this project.
 - Question: A strategy of only allowing service vehicles to access the site via Paint Branch Parkway was suggested; why was this not included?
 - Response: The goal should be traffic porosity; these vehicles will access the site from all major arterials (this is the ninth strategy).
- Uses – first strategy
 - Question: How was the final definition of “big box” retail (stores larger 40,000 square feet) determined?
 - Response: This is based on educated guesses related to “junior anchors (e.g., bookstore, gym). The retail industry changes rapidly all the time so it’s not a good idea to be too restrictive with this.
 - Follow-up comment: The community wants a real college town; stores this size don’t fit evoke that feeling.
 - Response: Some people want these kinds of tenants. As the market changes, floor plates will need to be flexible. Small tenants require larger/chain tenants to draw people to their stores.
 - Follow-up comment: Ok, then we’ll address this at Detailed Site Plan (DSP) review.
 - Response: DSP review doesn’t address floor plates or tenants.
 - Follow-up question: How many 40,000+ square foot stores could there be (at any given time)?
 - Response: 3-5.
- Uses – second strategy
 - Question: Regarding small business, why only 30%, why as many as 6 other locations in the metro area, and no local ownership requirement? [These are all less restrictive elements than in the Committee’s recommendations.]
 - Response [Doug]: We removed the local ownership requirement because the emphasis should be on unique and specialty.
 - Response [Bob]: Being too top-down in these requirements is not workable.
 - Follow-up comment: This has been done successfully elsewhere.
 - Response: This market is different and less robust than others.
 - Response [Doug]: We understand that we need to give some assurance to the community that this will not be another Downtown Silver Spring.
 - Question: Can you explain in more detail what the second bullet means?
 - Response: The tenant allowance is used to help locate small businesses. We will update the document to reflect this.
 - Question: Why was “local bookstores are key” removed? We don’t want a large, chain bookstore.

- Response: There is no reason to single out one kind of store.
- Uses – third strategy
 - Question: Regarding the graduate housing, can you add something about affordability?
 - Response: This will be reflected in the GDA.
- Uses – fifth strategy
 - Question: What does “Pocomoke Market” mean?
 - Response: The idea is something like a farmers market.
 - Follow-up question: Would this conflict with requirement of the planned grocery store?
 - Response: It might.
 - Follow-up comment: It would be nice to collaborate with the College of Agriculture on this.
 - Response: Agreed.
- Uses – sixth strategy
 - Question: What percentage of the Mikulski funds will be spent on wireless networks? This funding was supposed to be spent on enhancing connectivity with downtown College Park.
 - Response: We don’t know yet. Also, we are trying to get more federal funding.
- Uses – general
 - Question: A strategy of having a percentage of retail offerings include environmentally preferable products was suggested; why was this not included?
 - Response: This is covered by the second strategy – attracting specialty stores.
- Project Initiatives and Resources – general
 - Question: A strategy of paying the prevailing wage during construction was suggested; why was this not included?
 - Response: This is a private project; we can’t afford to meet this suggested requirement.
 - Follow-up comments: It is also a public project as it involves State land and local funding. The community will fight for this. We also want an emphasis on jobs for the local community.

Other Issues

A Committee member ended the meeting with the following points: Committee members have to represent their communities, but they can’t be so demanding as to make the project impossible. The developer has made a good faith effort so far through this process.