

Notes from the October 22, 2007 Meeting of the East Campus Redevelopment Community Review Steering Committee

Introduction

Doug Duncan opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

He then raised the idea of postponing the next meeting (October 29), for two reasons: a draft of the Committee principles document has not yet been finalized, and there is a public forum on the College Park segment of the Purple Line on October 29. No Committee members objected, so it was decided to postpone the next meeting. The new date and time will be determined and disseminated soon.

Doug also stated that the principles would be sent to the Committee this week, for review prior to the next meeting.

The meeting was then opened to the Committee to raise questions and comments on any outstanding issues.

A Committee member, Rob Goodspeed, was given the opportunity to do a mini-presentation on two issues that were raised at the previous (October 8) meeting: the Purple Line alignment and street connectivity. *Note: As with the meeting topics presented by the developer team each week, since Mr. Goodspeed's presentation was Powerpoint-based, these notes will not detail all of the information included in the slides. Mr. Goodspeed will be posting his presentation on his website, <http://www.rethinkcollegepark.net/blog/>. The following notes cover the Q&A that occurred after his presentation.*

- Comment: Connectivity works but not when done partially. The presentation used Bethesda as an example of connectivity working, but there are areas in Bethesda that are not fully connected and where traffic does spill onto side streets. In the Old Town area of College Park, connectivity would require connections across the railroad tracks, and this idea has been rejected in the past.
 - Response: Note again that there are various ways to restrict the use of residential streets. It is easier to do this than build connections later.
- Comment: The Old Town Civic Association voted unanimously to reject connections.
- Comment: Connections should be added so that residents of Calvert Hills don't have to go out to Route 1 to access East Campus.

Discussion

Note: The presentation portions of each meeting topic largely followed the presentation slides. Printouts of the slides were available at the meeting and will be posted on the 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.

Introduction

Presentation (Richard Perlmutter, Foulger-Pratt/Argo)

- Quick overview of the agenda (economic impact, finance, land use, and design).

Economic Impact Study

Presentation (Len Bogorad, RCLCO)

- [No additional information.]

Q&A

- Question: Is the school surcharge included in the Public Safety Surcharge figure in the report?
 - Response: No, it is included separately (Public School Facility Surcharge).
- Question: The report says that 88% of East Campus jobs being taken by residents of Prince George's County and 16% by residents of College Park. How were these percentages determined?
 - Response: From U.S. Census commuting data.
- Question: Will tax relief begin at the beginning of the project?
 - Response: Yes, in the form of Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

Community Benefits

Presentation (Elizabeth Davison, RCLCO)

- Large projects like East Campus have non-financial benefits too.
- The economic impact study examined two case studies: Downtown Silver Spring and Bowie Town Center. East Campus' impact will probably fall somewhere in between the impact these two projects had on their surrounding areas (Downtown Silver Spring's impact has been much more extensive).
- Substantial spin-off development is likely here but not to nearly the degree as in Silver Spring, because Silver Spring was in significant decline before that project occurred.

Q&A

- Question: Can you provide some details on the Bowie Town Center case study?
 - Response: Some development and redevelopment has occurred, but not nearly as much as in Silver Spring. See the report for more details.

Public Finance Overview

Presentation (Richard Perlmutter, Foulger-Pratt/Argo)

- [No additional information.]

Q&A

- Comment [Bob Peck, The Staubach Company]: As support for the idea that public investment is necessary for this project, after the RFP was sent and proposals were evaluated there were three finalists. All three said public finance was necessary to make this project financial viable. The other two finalists proposed higher levels of public finance than the developer that was chosen.

Tax Increment Finance Overview

Presentation (Keenan Rice, Municap, Inc)

- TIF is popular with the public sector because it is self-financing.
- It is a way to leverage public money to get private investment where otherwise it would not be feasible.
- It is used to finance public facilities and amenities.

Q&A

- Question: In the early years of the project, will College Park spend more (in services) than it receives (in taxes)?
 - Response: No, because needed services will ramp up with the increasing amount of development (and tax base).
 - Response: Also, this study was conservative in that assumed a standard level of local expenditures, even though in this case some things will be paid for privately, such as police.
- Question: As the land will still owned by the State, which does not pay property taxes, please explain why there will now be property taxes owed on this site.
 - Response: The property tax owed is on the improvements. The land will still not be taxed.
- Question: Will the University pay property taxes on the improvements when it receives ownership of the improvements at the end of the ground lease (75 years)?
 - Response: We have not determined this yet but will think about it.
- Question: Is it correct that not all of the property tax revenue from the improvements will go to pay for the TIF?
 - Response: Yes, and after the TIF bonds have been paid off, all of the property tax revenue will go the involved jurisdictions.
- Question: What is the nature of the gap mentioned in the presentation as being what the public finance is needed to cover?
 - Response: The gap includes higher costs, such as structured parking, and lower than urban market rents.
- Question: Is it correct that the public is being asked to pay to build the streets and structured parking but will not own them? This is different from the College Park parking garage project, where College Park will own the garage.
 - Response: Yes. Keep in mind that the money for this comes from tax revenue that otherwise would not exist.
 - Response: For the structured parking, the TIF is necessary to cover the gap that is not paid for by parking fees.

- Response: While the government will not own the streets, this means it will not have to pay for their maintenance.
- Response: In Downtown Silver Spring, the streets are maintained at a higher level than if they were publicly owned.
- Question: Where does the figure of \$1.9 million for College Park's annual expenses related to East Campus come from?
 - Response: It is derived from a standard formula for typical city services. See the report for more details.
- Question: How big a TIF will you be requesting?
 - Response: It is too early to know.
- Comment: In this and some other areas, the Committee needs more specific numbers in order to understand and evaluate the project.

Development Review Process

Presentation (Bill Shipp, O'Malley, Miles, Nylen & Gilmore)

- The East Campus site is part of the MNCPPC's College Park Route 1 Sector Plan, which will be one the main sources of guidelines for this project.
 - It is highly detailed – more so than typical master plans.
 - The East Campus submissions will address every guideline and requirement that applies to this site.

Q&A

- Question: The presentation lists many organizations that review development plans – what about compliance with the Federal Aviation Administration and Maryland Aviation Administration?
 - Response: MNCPPC will get a consent letter from FAA at the preliminary plan of subdivision stage. This is a statutory requirement.
 - Response: The developer also plans to work with these agencies ahead of time, before the formal review.
- Question: What is the nature of the University's review?
 - Response: The project will need approval from the Board of Regents for the general development agreement. University bodies that will review the project include the Architectural Design Standards Board and the Facilities Council.
 - Follow-up question: What about public input?
 - Response: There are several ways for the public to be involved in review. MNCPPC will have public hearings. College Park will very likely have public meetings. As a group, this Committee may be part of the University's review process.
- Comment: This Committee should be a party of record.
 - Response: The Committee is not a formal body, but each individual member can apply to be a person of record.
- Question: Who will own the storm water management facilities?
 - Response: The developer, but they will be regulated.

Architectural Design

Presentation (Jon Eisen, StreetSense)

- It is important to understand that there is no design for this project at this stage – the architecture team is still trying to understand things like massing, density, views and relationships.
- The focus is on Phase I.
- We have started looking at streets – widths, types, etc.
- Design guidelines (addressing things like typology, massing and materials) will be developed in time for the detailed site plan stage, so that all parties that contribute to the future development of the project have a common understanding of what is expected.
 - We are studying the surrounding context, and also other college towns.
 - We want an organic look, which will come in part from diversity in design.
- Streetscape is very important to the success of the design.
 - Most Phase I buildings will have ground floor retail.
 - The goal is to have active, animated streets.

Q&A

- Question: The presentation shows many design ideas but nothing specific to East Campus. Are there any design details?
 - Response: It is too early at this stage to have chosen specific designs. One thing that is known is that we want high-quality materials.
- Question: Is the goal still to complement the traditional Georgian architectural style of the University campus?
 - Response: We are still considering this but we don't know yet how it will translate for this project. We can try to pick up elements, such as rhythm and materials.
- Comment: There is concern that the design in the presentation is all modern and this would not respect the local architectural character.
 - Response [Garth Rockcastle]: This is a legitimate concern, but note that Jon has been working with the School of Architecture and is very open to our ideas.
- Other comments from Garth:
 - The design guidelines will be critical and the School of Architecture is anxious to start on this. They will be necessary in order to create a distinct project. Please consider interesting strategies ways to get participation and input, such as a design competition. The project's character is going to be more important here than in typical projects.
 - Going back to the issue of project boundaries, there are three areas of particular interest and concern: [The following language is from a follow-up conversation with Garth to clarify this comment.]
 - The fractured relationship between the future, more densely developed East Campus and the existing Downtown area, with the Fraternity Row field being a particular opportunity.
 - A view and pedestrian access corridor from the south to Memorial Chapel.
 - A potential realignment of Paint Branch Parkway at the main entrance to campus that slides it to the south. This would provide the developer higher quality and quantity housing on the north side of the realigned Paint Branch

Parkway, and allow the future Purple Line stop (if it is on Paint Branch Parkway) to be more central to project.

- It is important that a structure and process be developed to allow these issues to be examined; these Committee meetings are not a sufficient vehicle to address them.
- Comment: If this committee is not going to address specific details regarding, for instance, design, perhaps there are other processes and groups that can, such as a subcommittee on principles and an architectural competition.
 - Response: Draft principles will be sent this week to the Committee for review and comments.
- Comment: Architectural design is the most passionate issue in the community. Calvert Hills and Old Town are designated historic districts and residents like the traditional, stately look of those areas.
- The proposed Paint Branch Parkway realignment could be a benefit in terms of the College Park Airport.
- Question: What tax relief is being proposed?
 - Response: Other than the TIF, the only potential relief being considered would be from Maryland's Admissions and Amusement Tax.
- Question: The drawings in the presentation don't include bike paths; are they going to be included in the project?
 - Response: Yes, they are still an important part of the project; they just weren't included in these early slides.
- Comment: A unique element with this project is the amount of talent in the University and community; this should be taken advantage of regarding the architectural design of the project.

Public Safety

Presentation (Richard Perlmutter, Foulger-Pratt/Argo and Doug Duncan, University of Maryland)

- Public safety will be provided by the University and there will also probably be private security.
- Design will be an important element of safety.
- The University is putting together a public safety plan for East Campus.

Q&A

- Question: Will the safety analysis include the surrounding area?
 - Response: Yes.
- Comment: Which police department will be responsible for East Campus?
 - Response: The University's.

Other Issues

[There were no other questions or issues raised.]