

Campus Plan Task Force Meeting Notes
Tuesday, October 26, 2010
7:00-9:00 pm
Mary Graydon Center, Rooms 5&6
American University

Meeting Agenda

Tonight's Task Force discussion focused on issues raised during the three preceding Campus Plan Community Task Force meetings process facilitated by Don Edwards of Justice and Sustainability Associates, LLC.

A list of these issues was distributed electronically to all Campus Plan Task Force members the day before the meeting. All meeting documents are available on the AU Campus Plan Web page at www.american.edu/finance/fas/campus-plan.cfm

David Taylor, chief of staff for AU President Neil Kerwin, opened the meeting and made introductions.

He reminded media who were present that any comments expressed during the meeting are not for attribution, and that reporters could follow up with individuals after the meeting.

Jorge Abud, Assistant Vice President for Facilities, Development and Real Estate, said that the university hoped to provide the community with a draft of the new Campus Plan on December 1, 2010 with the intention of filing the plan with the Zoning Commission on February 1, 2011. This would provide the community 60 days to review the proposed plan and to provide comments back to the university.

Abud said plans for the Tenley campus will be included in the Campus Plan filing and would include proposed buildings, heights, and building size. Don Edwards noted that previous presentations about Tenley are posted on the Campus Plan Web page.

A participant asked for more concrete details of what is planned for the Tenley campus. David Taylor explained that plans for Tenley have been slower to develop because the university has just hired an architect for Tenley. He added that while plans for Tenley will be identified as a site, they will not include further processing. Smaller discussions have been held with Tenley neighbors.

Another member raised a question about the need for consideration of the historical aspects of the campus. Jorge Abud said that historical preservation of AU's entire campus will be addressed in the Campus Plan draft.

A question was asked about what would happen to the current law school building at 4801 Massachusetts Avenue if the Washington College of Law moved to the Tenley campus as currently proposed. Jorge Abud said no decisions had been made about use of the existing law school building, but that the university's present thinking is that it makes sense to continue use of the current configuration of classrooms and offices.

It was suggested that the Tenley campus be on the agenda for the next Campus Plan task force meeting, along with any explicit plans for the 4801 Massachusetts Avenue building.

Jorge Abud provided an explanation of Further Processing in response to apparent un-clarity among some participants. It is a separate filing that includes greater design detail, building height, area entrances, façade, materials, specific uses, and more detailed transportation information. Further processing is being proposed for Nebraska Hall and the East Campus, and will be addressed at a later time for the Tenley campus.

A question was asked about the East Campus and whether plans still included 860 beds. Jorge Abud said that the university is reexamining the number of beds on the East Campus as a result of listening to our neighbors.

Don Edwards moved to the next item on the agenda that is a discussion of the outline of issues raised during the previous facilitated meetings. He asked for Task Force feedback to confirm that the items listed are accurate, to see if anything is missing, and to determine next steps.

Comments included:

- The outline doesn't reflect the concerns of the neighbors.
- The list needs to include more about the impact on the neighborhood and the city.
- The reference to sites should include moving or replacing existing buildings. Some of AU's existing buildings look undistinguished or blighted.
- Address possible contamination of WWI munitions on the South campus site.
- The outline does not reflect the effort the community has voiced – this is a bucket of topics – where are the issues.
- Dismantling of the chemistry building is a non issue.
- The outline needs to address the public space along Massachusetts, Nebraska and New Mexico Avenues. A drawing that shows the public space would be helpful.

Don Edwards asked if there would be a better way to capture a list of items that the university could address in a systematic way.

Comments included:

- I'm not sure this list helps with issues such as the core versus periphery. AU has tried and tried and tried to engage people to talk about the buffer on the East Campus.
- There will be a fight at the Zoning Commission so I don't think cataloging a list and then just chugging through it is helpful.
- You should get this to everyone one to two weeks before a meeting.
- On traffic studies – we want to see more about levels of service rather than the amount of cars. Our concern is the impact of new patterns of living when you put dorms on the edge of campus. We see things differently than you do. Rockwood Parkway is already a commuter cut-through street.
- We need one more meeting about the Tenley campus and then you should go forward with the plan.
- Parking issues still need to be addressed
- Neighbors near the East Campus should consider moving or stepping down height of buildings.

- How does putting dorms on Nebraska Avenue impact the problems with Ward Circle?
- This list is a bucket of topics, but not the issues that have been raised.

A question was asked about design of the East Campus and whether dorms look into Westover. Jorge Abud said the design can tilt the buildings so this doesn't happen, but the best mitigation is distance and landscape buffering.

Don Edwards asked how the time of the task force could best be used between now and the time the draft is ready for them.

One member suggested using this time for small group meetings with Westover, Ft. Gaines and Tenley neighbors, and added that what happens on the East Campus is fundamentally a concern to the neighbors living at Westover and that the only way to make progress is a small group discussion.

Jorge Abud said the university that the university would also like to have some smaller meetings.

A question was raised about whether the Campus Plan would include a new fraternity and sorority row of housing. Gail Hansen, Vice President of Campus Life for AU said there are no plans for individual Greek chapter houses.

Other comments:

- Hold a campus plan design charrette to move the dorms to the center of the campus and limit the scale of the buildings to three stories on the edge of the campus.
- Neighbors are not trying to fight progress but are concerned about scale and quantity. When the proposed new residence halls are built on the South side of campus, there will be more than 2,000 students concentrated there. The scale of the buildings is impacted by designing them with suites rather than dorm rooms in existing residence halls like Anderson and Centennial.

A question was asked about the total number of beds the university is planning to build. Jorge Abud said that a key component of the proposed design reflected the Zoning Commission requirement that the university house two thirds of its undergraduates, and 85 percent of its freshmen and sophomores on campus. If that Zoning Commission requirement were changed, the university might like at housing differently.

A comment from a Westover member suggested retaining the existing 500 beds at the Tenley campus and adding additional beds there. Others disagreed, saying that pushing students into other neighborhoods would be opposed.

Another task force member said that putting the law school at Tenley and mixing it with housing for undergraduate students who are then three quarters of a mile away from the campus does not make sense. He added that AU's goal of bringing students back to live on campus is an important achievement and that neighbors do not want more students dotted in the neighborhoods.

The date for the next meeting will be announced.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.