

Howard University Campus Plan Task Force

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

27 June 2011

Attendees

Patrick Nelson, Development Corporation of Columbia Heights, Emergence Community Arts Collective, Pleasant Plains Resident

Tina Brower-Thomas, Ph.D., LeDroit Park Resident, University-wide Campus Master Plan Steering Committee

Maria Fyodorova, Vice President, LeDroit Park Civic Association

Anita Rice, LeDroit Park Civic Association

John Salatti, ANC 5C04, Bloomingdale Civic Association

Sylvia Robinson, Executive Director, Emergence Community Arts Collective

Elaine Bourne Heath, Ph.D., Howard University Dean of Student Services

Marc Lee, Howard University Dean of Residence Life and Off-Campus Housing

Michael Harris, Co-Chair, University-wide Campus Master Plan Steering Committee

Maybelle Taylor Bennett, Co-Chair, University-wide Campus Master Plan Steering Committee, Director Howard University Community Association

Meeting Highlights

This was the first of four meetings scheduled for late June and the month of July to discuss issues the University's neighbors had so far with respect to the Campus Master Plan (CMP). The issues raised in the meeting of the Joint Community Advisory Committee and Community Campus Master Plan Task Force held on Thursday June 23rd., included:

- 1) Transportation Plan, Parking, East-West Vehicular connections
- 2) Students' behavior in off-campus housing
- 3) Alley closures
- 4) Howard Town Center
- 5) Vacant Dormitories (what happens to them?)
- 6) Continuation of the CAC and the presence of the Senior Vice President

A schedule of meetings was developed to address these issues based on the availability of University staff and consultants who were capable of addressing the concerns raised.

The schedule is as follows:

- June 27th: Students' behavior in off-campus housing; review of the filed CMP; Guests: Dean Marc Lee, Dean of Residence Life and Off-Campus Housing; Dean Elaine Bourne Heath, Dean of Student Services
- July 14th: Alley closings, zoning changes; boundary changes; review of the filed CMP
- July 25th: Transportation, parking, east-west connections; review of the filed CMP; Guests: Dan VanPelt, Gorove Slade Transportation and Traffic Consultants
- July 28th: Howard Town Center, plans for vacant dormitories, continuation of transportation and traffic issues, continuation of the CAC with SVP in attendance; Guests: Senior Vice President Troy Stovall and Dan VanPelt (if needed)

Student Conduct in Off-Campus Housing

Overall, it was agreed that the development of more housing closer to the campus was a positive element in the campus master plan. It was further acknowledged that the vast majority of students who live in off-campus housing are good neighbors.

However, there are those who are not, and it is important that the University:

- create infrastructure for building better relationships;
- develop crisis management strategies for addressing complaints that come in from community members; and
- provide more on-campus opportunities for students to have fun.

Specific recommendations in each of these issue areas are as follows:

Infrastructure for Building Better Relationships:

1. Continue with the development of an off-campus housing policy that can be placed into the student handbook.
2. Develop an inventory of off-campus housing so that students who live off-campus can be readily identified by address.

3. Regularly convene students who live off-campus for meetings that: a) orient them to community history and heritage, introduce them to community leaders and provide them with tips they may find helpful for safety and convenient adjustment to community living; and b) inform them of off-campus housing policies, their rights and responsibilities.
4. Work with the civic associations to organize community welcoming events for students when they move into the neighborhoods.
5. Establish a website designed to provide students and community members with valuable information about off-campus housing policies that will: a) post the off-campus housing policies, handbook citations and student Code of Conduct provisions that govern them; and b) provide important contact information that students and community members will find helpful (e.g. key University officials, numbers of civic association and Advisory Neighborhood Commission leadership, etc.)
6. Continue to work with the Community Association to sponsor events where the community and students come together around activities that clean, beautify and create a safer environment for the community. These same activities can serve a meet-and-greet purpose and include fun events that reduce anonymity and support respectful interchange among student and non-student community members.
7. Coordinate with DCRA to obtain information on landlord owners of buildings where students live so that where appropriate, they can be held accountable for any adverse impacts caused by their properties or those who reside within them. Establish two-way communication with DCRA as it relates to these issues.

Crisis Management

1. Provide the students and community with the names and contact information of University staff, Campus Police and MPD personnel to contact in the event of disturbances and/or nuisance complaints that occur;
2. Develop a complaint form that can be filled out on line by any complainant who wishes to alert University personnel of a concern they have;
3. Appoint a University staff member to monitor the complaints filed on a daily basis, and assure that on weekends, evenings and holidays complaints are monitored as well;
4. Outline the procedures that students and community members should follow in the event any number of issues arise, such as:
 - a. loud parties
 - b. roving groups of students through the streets

- c. illegal parking in alleys and elsewhere
 - d. illegal dumping of bulk trash when pick-up is not scheduled
 - e. any kind of illegal activity
 - f. disrespectful and/or threatening communications of any kind
5. Describe the steps by which complaints are processed and the timelines within which they are to be addressed.
 6. Identify what issues the University can address, what issues the University cannot address, and where MPD and/or the Landlord Tenant Division of DCRA and others are the more appropriate places to lodge complaints;
 7. Identify landlord and tenants' rights and responsibilities as they relate to the off-campus housing in which students reside, including what to do in the event that issues arise such as: safety hazards on the property; overflowing trash problems; overcrowding; rodent and/or insect infestation; etc.

Provide More Opportunities to Have Fun on Campus

This was an issue that resulted in a very spirited discussion which focused on:

- how the CMP addressed this issue in the renovation and expansion of Blackburn;
- the reasons for so much partying that goes on in off-campus settings;
- the University's restrictive policies on alcohol and visitation; and
- the risks at which students place themselves when parties off-campus get out of hand and uninvited guests arrive on the scene.

A number of reasons were described for partying on campus not being seen as "cool" by many students. Facilities on campus may not be open late enough. The restriction on alcohol consumption and the limited number of activities that are available to be enjoyed on campus don't compare with off-campus fun activities. Having fun does not always comport with there being well-lit, adult-supervised settings that close early in the eyes of many students.

The Student Affairs Division will be working closely with the facility planners for the Blackburn expansion and renovation to program activities that will be more exciting to students; however, it was agreed that the activities planned may still not be a substitute for the kinds of activities the students find so attractive off-campus.

