

Howard University Campus Plan Task Force

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

14 July 2011

Attendees

Mr. Eric Fidler, LeDroit Park Civic Association
Mr. Timothy Jones, ANC 4C08, Alumnus, Howard University
Mr. Tony Norman, ANC 1B10
Mr. Drew McCracken, Georgia Avenue Community Development Task Force,
Pleasant Plains Resident
Ms. Maxine Brown-Roberts, D.C. Office of Planning
Dr. Tina Brower-Thomas, LeDroit Park Civic Association
Dr. Ernest Quimby, Georgia Avenue Community Development Task Force,
Professor, Sociology/Anthropology, Howard University
Mr. Christopher Hopson, Office of the Senior Vice President, Howard University
Mr. Michael Harris, Co-Chair, University-wide Campus Master Plan Steering Committee
Ms. Diane Branch, Associate Vice President for Real Estate and Asset Management
Dr. Hassan Minor, Senior Vice President, Howard University
Ms. Maybelle Taylor Bennett, Co-Chair, University-wide Campus Master Plan Steering
Committee, Director, Howard University Community Association

Meeting Highlights

In this second of four meetings scheduled for late June and the month of July to discuss issues that the University's neighbors raised regarding the campus master plan, the topics covered included:

- 1) Alley closures;
- 2) Zoning changes; and
- 3) Campus boundary expansion.

In addition, a number of other issues arose around issues that will be addressed in future meetings, such as transportation and the Howard Town Center.

Alley Closures

Maybelle Bennett began the discussion with a description of the three types of alley closures being proposed. She discussed the fact that the use of the word "closure" can be misleading, and the three examples cited illustrated that.

In the first alley "closure," located in Square 3065 bounded by "W" Street NW on the south, Bryant Street NW on the north, Georgia Avenue NW on the west, and Sixth Street NW on the east, the alley itself is not proposed at this time to be physically closed. Privatization of

the alley is proposed to allow for the construction of a garage beneath the entire square and the potential for a building bridge above the alley.

In the second alley closure, located in square 2875 bounded by Barry Place NW on the north, V Street NW on the south, Eighth Street NW on the east and Ninth Street NW on the west, the proposal is for the alley to be closed from the approximate location of where "W" Street might be extended on an east-west axis through the square to its northern terminus. From the "W" Street east-west axis south to V Street NW, the alley would remain open.

The third alley closure is proposed as an actual physical closure. That would take place in Square 3058, bounded by Girard Street NW on the north, Fairmont Street NW on the south, Sixth Street, NW on the east and Georgia Avenue NW on the west. Due to the need for a large floor plate for the new Intercollegiate Athletic Complex, the entire square would need to be occupied. This would require the demolition of the Howard Manor, the Effingham Apartments and Cook Hall.

The question arose as to whether once an alley is privatized, the owner can exercise its discretion to leave it available for use by the public or restrict that use in some way. It was explained that once the alley is privatized, the owner has the same discretion as any other property owner has regarding the use of that land. An example of a privatized street that is left open for public use is Bryant Street NW between Sixth and Fourth Streets, NW.

Drew McCracken said he felt that once privatized, the owner should be required to keep the alley open for public use. Maybelle Bennett indicated that objections to alley closures can be made before the Council of the District of Columbia where street and alley closings are approved. The University was describing these series of campus master plan implementation steps so that the public will have as full an understanding of what the plan anticipates as needed in order to bring it to full fruition. Drew McCracken also expressed his objection to the way the Howard Plaza Towers cuts off Ninth Street so that it is closed to the public who might want to bicycle through the University's private property for through-access.

Zoning Changes

Maybelle Bennett described the proposed zoning changes that the University would seek along the east side of Georgia Avenue NW from Bryant Street NW on the north to Florida Avenue on the south. She explained that currently these parcels were zoned with light industrial zoning, C-M-2 and C-M-3 respectively, which accommodated the light industries prevalent in the area many years ago. However, at this point, the University is seeking to change this zoning to the same mixed-use CR zoning found on the west side of Georgia Avenue directly opposite these sites. The advantages that the change of zoning would afford the University are several:

- a) The current light industrial zoning in this location is not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan of the National Capital. The vision for this area is intended for mixed use and institutional development. The proposed zoning changes would bring the zone districts in alignment with the Comprehensive Plan.

b) Housing is not permitted to be developed in industrially-zoned areas, so changing the zoning to CR would permit the development of housing on these sites if the University were to include it in this or future plans.

c) In the square currently zoned C-M-2, the University would be able to build up to a height of 90 feet with a 6.0 FAR instead of the current 60 feet with the 4.0 FAR currently allowed in the C-M-2 zone district. A maximum of 607,512 sq. ft. could be developed instead of the 405,008 sq. ft..

d) In the area zoned C-M-3, the allowable height of 90 feet with a 6.0 FAR would not change.

Tony Norman indicated that he wanted the University to be candid about the advantages that the University received with the change of zoning, and that he did not have any objections to the increased density allowed with the change of zoning from C-M-2 to CR because this would bring the kind of activity and revitalization the neighborhood wanted to see in this section of Georgia Avenue.

Campus Boundary Expansion

Maybelle Bennett described the campus boundary expansion proposed as including only that triangular site located just to the east of the Howard University Service Center. That site is bounded by Barry Place on the north, Florida Avenue on the west and south, and Sherman Avenue on the east. Currently the site is being used as a parking lot, and the University was granted a special exception in 2006 to use that site for University use for a five year period that expired in the month of June, 2011. Including the site in the campus master plan makes the request for permanent University use of the site timely.

Other Issues

Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science (MS)²

Maybelle Bennett explained to the group that the introduction of the Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science (MS)² to the central campus needs to be acknowledged in this update of the University's campus master plan. Therefore, a simultaneous further processing of an application for the school will take place along with the application for the campus master plan and the student housing further processing application.

She further explained that since the school's inception, there have been no complaints from the neighbors and no indication of adverse impacts generated by the school's presence. The bulk of the students travel to the school via public transit, the parking for the faculty and staff has been absorbed into the overall University's parking inventory, and pick-up and drop-off of students takes place at the Fourth Street gate without impeding traffic along Fourth Street.

Proposed Workforce-Affordable Housing

Tina Brower-Thomas would like to see the schedule for developing the workforce-affordable housing moved up from Phase 3 to Phase 2. It was explained that if the University were successful in attracting developers with whom it wished to partner in creating housing of this type, the schedule for its development may, in fact, take place sooner than later.

Eric Fidler remarked that the University's ability to attract more professors and University workers into the area would be a positive development for the neighborhood. It would make the area more attractive to developers and prompt more private investment in the area. It also reduces the amount of traffic that comes back and forth to the University, since these University employees will be within walking distance of their workplace.

Howard Town Center

Dr. Minor was asked whether or not the group would discuss the Howard Town Center, and they were reminded that on July 28th, Troy Stovall was scheduled to update them on the progress of the negotiations underway. Dr. Minor described the history of the Town Center and the many issues that delayed its development. These included:

- a) initial plans for the city's Forensic Laboratory on the site;
- b) the litigation that took place between DHCD and the Peoples Involvement Corporation;
- c) the unsuccessful negotiations between Trammel Crow, Michele Hagans and the University; and
- d) the collapse and demise of Lehman Brothers, which would have provided the lead financing for the current developer.

Howard University Research Building I (HURB I)

Dr. Minor indicated that the University's executive leadership will be considering a proposal for the installation of an ambulatory care center in the HURB I facility, located at 1840 Seventh Street NW across the street from the new Progression Place that is currently under construction.

Maybelle Bennett mentioned that this proposal will be considered in the context of the original proposal to rezone the site in a manner that matches the zoning of Progress Place across the street and redevelop the site to its fullest potential with uses that are compatible with those envisioned in the *DUKE Plan*. The *Duke Plan* envisions the demolition of the existing building, and the development of a mixed use project with active ground floor retail uses and a structure that maximizes the density at this location (The Duke Plan, p. 14).

Additional Community Outreach

Drew McCracken asked if the University had reached into the Cardozo-Shaw Neighborhood Association area or into the Garfield Terrace development. Maybelle Bennett indicated that

overtures had been made to Christine Szathmary, and that she was included on the task force list and a conversation was had with her husband. She has been invited to join the meetings, but there has been no response. In addition, there is still time to further engage neighbors regarding the campus master plan, and Garfield Terrace can be one of the additional communities visited. Mr. McCracken was invited to join Ms. Bennett in her visit to Garfield Terrace. Banneker High School also needs to be visited, as a previously-scheduled visit had to be cancelled.