

Richardson Olmsted Complex Master Plan

ARCHITECTURE AND VISITOR CENTER SPECIAL CAG MEETING

November 11, 2008

7:00 PM

Church at Baynes and Potomac

CAG

✓ Justin P. Azzarella
Dr. Stan Bratton
Dr. Cynthia A. Conides
Benjamin Christy
Ray Clark
Drew Eszak
Robert Franke
Harvey Garrett

✓ Heather Gring
✓ Anne Harding Joyce
Francis R. Kowsky
Richard Mack
Michael McLean
✓ Gregory M. Patterson
Ted Pietrzak
Elaine M. Pyne

✓ Dr. Barbara Seals
Nevergold
✓ Tim Tielman
✓ Max Willig
Alternates
✓ Cynthia Van Ness for
Cynthia Conides

RCC

✓ Tom Blanchard
✓ Eva Hassett

✓ Monica Pellegrino Faix

Consultants

✓ Barry Alberts
✓ Alice Carey
✓ Elizabeth Cheteny
✓ David Gamble
✓ Jajeane Rose-Burney
✓ Bob Shibley

Agenda

Agenda

1. Introduction from the CAG co-chairs
2. Introduction from the RCC
3. Review updates and process for the Architecture and Visitors Center
(RCC – 15 minutes)
4. Review updates on the Master Plan
(CKS – 30 minutes)
5. Group Discussion
(CAG – 45 minutes)
6. Next Steps
 - November 24 CAG meeting

Summary

Agenda Item: Introductions

Discussion and Conclusions:

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) co-chairs introduced the special meeting regarding the Architecture and Visitor Center / Master Plan. As a result of CAG member requests, the goals for the meeting were:

1. To show the process of reevaluating the Architecture and Visitors Center program elements of the Master Plan and its scope.
2. To respond to the request for more in-depth information regarding the Architecture and Visitors Center and the Master Plan.
3. To create an opportunity for more in-depth discussion of community values related to the plan.

Action items

Person responsible

Deadline

Agenda Item: Architecture and Visitor Center

Discussion and Conclusions:

The Richardson Center Corporation (RCC) presented updates on planning for the Architecture and Visitor Center, the draft concept design prepared by Ralph Appelbaum Associates and the preliminary Feasibility Study prepared by ConsultEcon.

The proposed concept includes a combination of architecture center, visitor center, and hotel/conference center. Initial thinking about the Architecture and Visitor Center placed it in Building 45 which is about 50,000 square feet. ConsultEcon's initial work on the feasibility analysis determined the mid range attendance projection to be 75,000/year. This attendance estimate suggested a reduced size of 10,000 to 12,000 square feet, in order for the operating budget to be sustainable. In addition, an examination of comparable architecture centers (Paris, Netherlands, Chicago) are in the range of 10,000 to 15,000 square feet. A September workshop with the Richardson Architecture Board, members of the community and the consultants explored the idea of a combined Architecture and Visitor Center and boutique hotel amenities in Building 45.

A preliminary design for these combined uses was prepared by Ralph Appelbaum Associates. Chan Krieger and Appelbaum will collaborate on the design for the mix of uses.

The preliminary plan is a starting point for discussion with the board and has not been formally adopted. The plan proposes the following:

- A proposed new addition to house the Visitor Center north of Building 45, below grade or at grade level. If below grade, the new addition can include an outdoor landscaped courtyard and "landscape lounge" for temporary installations and outdoor events above it. The addition could be connected to Building 45 by way of a new glass volume that replaces the current addition on the north façade.
- Access to Building 45 can be allowed at the north and south entrances with each institution having a separate entrance to Building 45 and acting independently. There are separate circulation patterns for the hotel and the Architecture Center, each using separate elevators and stairs.
- Floor 1 can be a shared lobby and circulation area for the hotel and the architecture center.
- Floor 2 can be exclusively used by the hotel as a main reception area. It is accessed through a main staircase on Floor 1 and a separate elevator. There is direct access to the adjacent wards, Building 10 and 44, which could have the rooms and other amenities.
- Floor 3 can house the Architecture Center's permanent exhibition.
- Floor 4 can serve as the main introductory experience to the Architecture Center that can also be used off-hours for rental or private events.

Action items

Person responsible

Deadline

Agenda Item: Updates on the Master Plan**Discussion and Conclusions:**

The Master Plan team, headed by CKS, presented updates on the Master Plan in relation to the Architecture and Visitor Center. (See the attached slideshow for the full presentation)

Four types of market uses for the complex were studied. They include retail, office, residential, and hotel.

- Retail was determined not to be viable. There is a high existing vacancy rate of local retail, suggesting there is no market for additional retail.
- Office space was determined not to be a likely use, unless it is office space built out for a predetermined user. There is a high existing office vacancy rate in Buffalo.
- There is no market for standard residential space. Data from the Master Plan's preliminary market studies suggested that high end residential units were possible, including townhomes and condominiums. However, many similar rehabilitation projects have had to subsidize residential development with the revenue from other types of uses. Rents from residential space at the Richardson Olmsted Complex will not cover the rehabilitation costs.
- There is a market for boutique, high end hotel space. There are high occupancy rates of existing hotels in the city, suggesting there is a market need for additional hotel space. There would be beneficial synergies between hotel space, conference space, and the Architecture and Visitor Center.

A full build out of the Richardson Olmsted Complex would require additional parking spaces: 331 (based upon zoning codes) and 441 (based upon market studies). On street parking can absorb 300 of these additional spaces.

Emergency stabilization of the entire Richardson building complex will cost approximately \$6.5 million, with additional costs for later phases to prepare the buildings for reuse. Emergency stabilization will prevent further deterioration and mothball the buildings pending future use. Further deterioration will increase the cost of stabilization in the long run.

The Master Plan team also offered a few critiques of the plans for the Architecture and Visitor Center.

- The proposed circulation pattern is complicated, making users have to go down a floor and then up again.
- The bulk of the proposed exhibit space is in the fourth floor chapel space. If the chapel is only used for exhibit space, other potential revenue generating uses would be displaced.
- Users entering the building should not be separated based upon which entrance they used, either north or south.
- Space sharing can help integrate uses so that they can benefit from each other. A new glass atrium on the north side of Building 45 can create space to be shared by all users, and create an active central space for the entire complex.
- The south entrance can remain as an accessible ceremonial entry point, but the opportunity to use the north side for a very active shared entrance makes sense logistically. Creating this north entrance keeps surface parking and service away from the future park on the south lawn.

Action items**Person responsible****Deadline**

Agenda Item: Discussion**Discussion and Conclusions:**

The CAG was asked to comment on the Architecture and Visitor Center presentation and the Master Plan presentation. The following comments were part of that discussion.

Location of the Architecture and Visitor Center

- Tim Tielman - Is the Richardson Olmsted Complex the best location for the region's visitor center? Moving the visitor center from downtown Buffalo would be bad for other businesses in downtown.
 - Tim Tielman - Can the architecture center and visitor center be separate from each other? If they could be separated, they could be planned differently, one would not rely on the other, and they can be in different locations. There are alternate locations that could be considered on the site, including the greenhouse (if reconstructed) and the women's kitchen. If all of the visitors are inside Building 45, it will make it hard for them to actually see the Richardson buildings. Often, outer buildings of similar complexes are restored first, and could be good locations for the Architecture and Visitor Center.
-

- The Master Plan team feels that Building 45 is a good location for the Architecture and Visitor Center because of the synergies created by proposed uses.

Access and Circulation

- Cynthia Van Ness - The ceremonial south entrance to Building 45 should be used. David Gamble stated that it may need to be modified slightly for handicapped accessibility.
- Gregory Patterson-Tanski - Neighborhood residents will likely access the center from the south entrance. David Gamble stated that additional landscape enhancements on the south side will make the south entrance the entrance for people arriving as pedestrians, and the north entrance the entrance for people arriving by vehicles.
- Anne Harding Joyce and Tim Tielman- Parking will need to be considered when determining where people will enter the Architecture and Visitor Center and the landscape impact. David Gamble said that they are working on site circulation; on street parking can absorb 300 spaces, reducing the need for parking lots.
- Tim Tielman - A clockwise circulation pattern off of Forest was originally intended by Olmsted and should be considered.

Synergistic Uses

- Member of the CAG present agreed that the hotel and conference center is a good synergistic use with the Architecture and Visitor Center.
- Justin Azzarella - Some Elmwood Avenue businesses fear that the hotel will be too distant from their businesses, and that the disconnect will reduce the potential positive impact that patrons of the hotel can have on their businesses. Connections between the hotel and the commercial district should be a focus of the Master Plan. Barry Alberts stated that the proposed hotel will not be a full service hotel. Hoteliers feel the connections to Elmwood Avenue businesses are amenities that will make a hotel at the Richardson Complex more successful. There may still be a market for a hotel on Elmwood, given that the Richardson hotel will be a high end boutique hotel.
- Heather Gring – What is the collaboration with Buffalo State College (BSC). David Gamble stated that BSC is beginning their master plan for the campus, and is having discussions with the RCC and Master Plan team regarding the best ways to integrate the two efforts.
- Heather Gring – What is the demand for a conference center? David Gamble stated that BSC feels that there is a need for a conference center near BSC and the adjacent cultural institutions. Other local interviews also supported the need for a conference center/event space at this location.

Community Values

- Barbara Seals Nevergold - Planning for the Architecture and Visitor Center seems to incorporate community values, including historic preservation and improving quality of life. It is not yet clear how best to integrate the psychiatric center with proposed new uses, including the Architecture and Visitor Center.
- Anne Harding Joyce – Is demolition being planned? David Gamble stated that in the current planning scheme, demolition of buildings is not being considered. Rehabilitation will be expensive though. Stabilization alone is estimated to be \$6.5 million, and will increase as buildings continue to deteriorate.
- Guest - Neighborhood security is a concern, especially in regards to proposed visitors using the Richardson Olmsted Complex.
- Tim Tielman - Like other landmark parks and buildings, the Richardson Olmsted Complex is an attraction in itself. It is the backdrop to recreation and an improved quality of life. An investment in stabilization and rehabilitation will bring people to the site and add to quality of life in ways not measurable by attendance counts at the Architecture and Visitor Center.

Visitation

- Cynthia Van Ness - There are concerns that projected visitation (75,000 people annually) of the Architecture and Visitor Center is too high. Other local cultural tourism attractions do not generally have 75,000 annual visitors. Tom Blanchard stated that visitation will depend upon programming, and the projected visitation is in the middle range of projections.

Action items

Anne Harding Joyce asked to see rehabilitation costs for The Ridges at Ohio University at Athens State

Person responsible

David Gamble

Deadline

ASAP

Parking and Circulation schemes will be presented to the CAG

David Gamble

Next CAG meeting

Agenda Item: Next Steps**Discussion and Conclusions:**

Eva Hassett asked if members of the CAG were satisfied in their request for more information on the Architecture and Visitor Center. The consensus was favorable.

The next CAG meeting, scheduled for November 24, will be moved to the first week of January. The Master Plan team would like to review work with the RCC first, and then present those updates to the CAG in January. The next CAG meeting will be on Tuesday January 6, 7pm at the Polish Cadets Hall. This meeting will give the CAG a chance to review the Master Plan, and prepare for the public meeting, scheduled for the end of January.

Action items**Person responsible****Deadline**

Schedule the next CAG meeting (Jan 6)

UDP

Complete

Schedule the public meeting

UDP

ASAP