

Richardson Olmsted Complex Master Plan

Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting

September 15, 2008

7:00 PM

Polish Cadets Hall

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
Tanski
✓ Ted Pietrzak
Elaine M. Pyne

✓ Dr. Barbara Seals
Nevergold
✓ Tim Tielman
✓ Max Willig
Alternates
✓ Michael Rizzo
✓ Jessica Biegaj
RCC
✓ Eva Hassett

✓ Monica Pellegrino Faix
Consultants
✓ David Gamble
✓ Brian Gregory
✓ Jajeane Rose-Burney
✓ Bob Shibley
✓ Mark Tytka

Agenda

Agenda

1. Introduction from the co-chairs (CAG – 5 minutes)
2. Summary of the last CAG meeting (CAG – 5 minutes)
3. Architecture and Visitors Center Progress (RCC – 10 minutes)
4. Review of the public meeting (UDP – 15 minutes)
5. Preparation of the first report from the CAG to the RCC (CAG – 25 minutes)
 - Input on Community Vision: Issues, Goals and Objectives
6. Community input and implications for the Master Plan (CKS – 15 minutes)
7. Overview of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) Process (PB – 10 minutes)
8. Next Steps (CAG – 5 minutes)
 - Comments on Input on the Community Vision
 - The next CAG meeting in November
 - Master Plan updates
 - The next public meeting in January
 - GEIS process

Summary

Agenda Item: Introductions

Discussion and Conclusions:

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) co-chairs began the meeting by introducing alternate advisory group representatives at the meeting:

- Michael Rizzo – President of the Grant Ferry Association
- Jessica Biegaj – West Side Community Collaborative

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) co-chairs also introduced members of the consultant team that had not been to a previous CAG meeting:

- Brian Gregory from Chan Krieger Sieniewicz
- Mark Tytko from Parsons Brinkerhoff America

An overview of the agenda for the meeting was presented. This included a brief description of the first report from the CAG to the RCC and Master Plan consultant team entitled *Community Vision: Issues, Goals, and Objectives*. All of the community input to date, including the CAG meetings, public meetings, and RCC Website comments were used as the basis of the first draft of this report.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
--------------	--------------------	----------

Agenda Item: Summary of the last CAG meeting

Discussion and Conclusions:

The consultant team presented a summary of the July 21, 2008 CAG meeting. This meeting was preparation for the public meeting scheduled for August 12, 2008.

At the last CAG meeting:

- The consultant team presented an initial analysis of the reuse potential of the site and solicited feedback from the CAG.
- New members of the CAG were asked “What will make the Master Plan a success?”

The 7-21-08 CAG meeting summary was approved as final by the CAG.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
-Post the final 7-21-08 CAG meeting summary on the RCC Web.	RCC/UDP	ASAP

Agenda Item: Architecture and Visitor Center Progress

Discussion and Conclusions:

The RCC presented a brief summary of the progress on planning for the Architecture and Visitors Center. Planning for the Architecture and Visitors Center is paralleled with the Master Plan for the Richardson Olmsted Complex. Both processes are informing each other. Discussion regarding the Architecture and Visitors Center included:

- Concerns that planning for the Architecture and Visitor Center is being conducted in isolation from the Master Plan and related community involvements.
 - The decision to go forward with the Architecture and Visitors Center seems predetermined, and the community wants more opportunity to provide feedback that will be incorporated.
 - Implications that the Architecture and Visitors Center will have for the Master Plan and the rehabilitation of the rest of the complex.
-

Action items**Person responsible****Deadline****Agenda Item: Review of the last public meeting****Discussion and Conclusions:**

The consultant team presented a brief summary of the last public meeting. This included results of the visioning session with the community. The visioning session included questions and discussion regarding the ideas presented by the Master Plan consultant team. Each question and resulting poll responses, as well as comments received from comment cards distributed at the meeting, were presented to the CAG. Discussion regarding the public meeting presentation and the visioning session included:

- There were concerns regarding the questions asked using the clicker polling technology. The questions were preceded by a qualifier that they were only meant to start a conversation and gain a general understanding about community values. The majority of people at the public meeting felt that the clickers were an improvement from other techniques to solicit audience feedback. Still, some of the CAG members and their constituencies felt that the questions were too leading and had predetermined results. There was little opportunity for audience members to think about the ramifications of the questions. Some questions did not have enough options and did not invite discussion. Members of the CAG suggested that the results should not be considered community consensus.
- Members of the CAG felt that the community needs more information to prepare for the public meetings, especially questions that they will be asked to respond to. This preparation can include:
 - Posting questions on the RCC Website.
 - Small community forums where the implications and constraints of the question options are presented. A danger of small community forums is that different information may be presented at each forum. CAG members were invited to suggest venues for such forums.
 - Distributing informational brochures prior to the public meeting.
- The August timing of the meeting made it difficult for people to attend.
- The context information presented at the meeting was appropriate and set up the meeting well.

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

-Post the final public meeting summary to the RCC Website.

RCC

ASAP

Agenda Item: Community Vision report from the CAG to the RCC**Discussion and Conclusions:**

The consultant team presented a summary of the draft report from the CAG to the RCC and the Master Plan consulting team, *Community Vision: Issues, Goals, and Objectives*, was presented to the CAG. The draft report was prepared with the support of the Urban Design Project, and was distributed for review by the CAG prior to the meeting. The report is a summary of community input from CAG meetings, discussions with CAG constituencies, the public meetings, and comments posted to the RCC Website. (See the final Community Vision report for a complete listing of issues, goals, and objectives.)

Four main categories of community issues are summarized in the report, including:

- Quality of life.
- Public accessibility.
- Historic Rehabilitation.
- Economic Development.

Each of seven goals and associated objectives were discussed. Below are the results of that discussion.

Goal 1 – Benefit people in adjacent neighborhoods.

Discussion included:

- Gentrification is undesirable, but community improvement generally leads to property value increases. Tools

must be utilized to combat gentrification. The report should include language that suggests that the lives of current residents should be improved, possibly through job creation and training opportunities, and efforts should be made not to displace them. The goal is to lift the lives of everyone in the neighborhood.

Goal 2 – Help revitalize and compliment the surrounding community.

There were no changes suggested to this goal.

Goal 3 – Allow the site to be publicly accessible.

Discussion included:

- Public accessibility should be achieved in the near term. Attracting more people to the site is considered positive. The desirability of access was balanced with the notion that “just any use” will not do. Some members of the CAG expressed the need to minimize onsite parking.
- The objective that states “promote building uses that allow public gathering spaces” should be clarified to read “promote uses of buildings that allow public gathering spaces.”
- It will be a challenge to allow public access but also respect the privacy of the patients of the psychiatric center.
- Buffalo State College students already walk through the site to get to and from the campus.
- A conversation with the Buffalo Psychiatric Center about security and public access should take place.

Goal 4 – Provide a framework for historic rehabilitation.

Discussion included:

- The objective that states “interpret the history of the treatment of mental health” should be amended to include the future of mental health treatment.
- The psychiatric center must be consulted with about providing appropriate parking and alternative parking designs. On-street parking may allow surface parking to be reduced.
- The objective that states “rehabilitate or interpret the landscape based upon Olmsted” should not include “interpret” because it is not well defined. The objective should include language that suggests following recommendations in the Historic Structures Report and the Cultural Landscape Report.

Goal 5 – Better integrate the psychiatric center.

Discussion included:

- An open, publicly accessible campus can help reduce the stigma of mental illness.
- Resident artist studios and gallery spaces can allow artists to work with psychiatric patients, showing the public how mental illness is treated through art. Public events such as dances and concerts can also allow the public and patients to interact.

Goal 6 – Gain broad community acceptance of the Master Plan.

There were no changes suggested to this goal.

Goal 7 – Implement the Master Plan

There were no changes suggested to this goal.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
-Amend the Community Vision report with CAG suggestions.	UDP	2 weeks
-Send additional revisions to the report to the RCC and consultant team.	CAG	2 weeks

Agenda Item: Community input and implications for the Master Plan

Discussion and Conclusions:

The consultant team presented a summary of the preliminary ideas for the Master Plan and how public input has shaped those ideas.

The public expressed interest in integrating the site with the surrounding cultural network, connecting the site with the Olmsted parks system, centering building 45, and restoring the historic South Lawn. The Master Plan will emphasize these ideas.

The baseline plan incorporates the issues addressed in the Community Vision report. This includes:

- Improving circulation, connectivity, parking, and vegetation.
 - Prioritizing landscape rehabilitation investments.
 - Stabilizing historic structures.
-

- Reusing the historic buildings.
- Allowing public access.

The consultant team described proposals for reusing Building 45 as an Architecture and Visitors Center, as well as various options for the reuse of the entire building complex.

The consultant team suggested that Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia is an example of public access on a historic site that has deteriorated and in poor conditions. The penitentiary is a popular destination even in a state of disrepair.

Discussion included:

- The plans for the Architecture and Visitors Center should be scrutinized further. It seems as if the RCC has already decided to go forward with the Architecture and Visitors Center without considering public concerns. There are concerns regarding its cost, its size, its location, and the subsequent need for more parking. Members of CAG asked who has final decision making power for the Master Plan and the Architecture and Visitors Center. Clearly these are RCC and BRAC Board decisions to be made with input from the community.
- The goal of the Architecture and Visitors Center should not be to get more people to the site to raise revenue. Rather, the goal should be to rehabilitate the complex, although revenue will be needed to do so.
- The success of the Architecture and Visitors Center cannot rely solely on tourism. Studies have shown that tourism alone cannot support facilities like this and that community uses are necessary.
- The CAG suggested that the community wants the full reuse of all of the buildings on the complex.
- Any public investment in the complex should be used to attract further private investment.
- Information on the process might be disseminated through a presentation to run on the public access television channel.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
--------------	--------------------	----------

Agenda Item: Overview of the GEIS

Discussion and Conclusions:

A summary of the Generic Environmental Impact (GEIS) process was presented to the CAG. The process is mandated by the State Environmental Quality Revue Act (SEQR). The purpose of the process is to incorporate the consideration of environmental factors into the existing planning, review and decision-making processes at the earliest possible time. The GEIS process will build upon community involvements that are part of the Master Plan process, including CAG and public meetings.

A GEIS:

- Provides a broad framework for what is acceptable based upon thresholds of change, rather than specific known changes that will occur.
- Determines what actions will require mitigation and recommends mitigation strategies.
- Determines what must take place if the action goes beyond the thresholds of change.

The GEIS process includes:

- Designation of a lead agency.
- Determination of the significance of the action (positive or negative declaration).
- Scoping.
- The draft GEIS.
- The final GEIS/Findings Statement.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
--------------	--------------------	----------

Agenda Item: Community input and implications for the Master Plan

Discussion and Conclusions:

The next Community Advisory Group will occur in November. It will give the CAG a chance to review Master Plan updates and prepare for the January public meeting.

Action items

Person responsible

Deadline