

OLD CONVENTION CENTER SITE REDEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

Martin Luther King, Jr. Library
November 8, 2005

Feedback and Comments from Stations

Project Considerations/Neighborhood Development Station

1. Several individuals asked me if the developer will be required to sign a First Source Agreement. I informed them that the developer has already signed it and the sub-contractors (when selected) will have to comply with First Source requirements.

Master Plan Design Concepts Station

1. A gentleman asked that there be room to incorporate public art into the open spaces, there was a concern about the distance to the metro from the new library.
2. There was support for a festival market type use on the open space, a couple suggested including a charter school.
3. There were some comments about not allowing 10th to go across NY Ave. in to the site.
4. A lady asked us to think about strategies for creating rich landscapes, much more than turf and trees. She was particularly fond of butterfly and rain gardens and told us what is needed for this to work is more of corridor than one isolated place.
5. First, this site should demonstrate technologies to address two of our most pressing problems--water quality (from deformed fish in the Anacostia to a dying Chesapeake Bay) and air quality (we have long been in a non-attainment category). Even if we want to pretend obliviousness to more global issues like climate change and the end of oil, we should at least address issues like the loss of pollinators.

The re-development of this site should demonstrate to the world that the Nation's Capital is ready to face the challenges of the 21st Century.

I like the idea for the mix of housing (including some non "market rate"), retail, arts and public library. The site should also be a demonstration of ultra-urban LID technologies (e.g, AOC rain garden at 1st & D NE) and have ZERO runoff of stormwater. I would also like to see it treat all of its own wastes through nutrient recycling and greywater re-use systems. It should foster car-sharing and bicycle-riding (I'd like to see a bicycle shelter similar to the one proposed for Union Station. I'd like to see a park that mimicked the nearby natural areas of the Potomac River valley--or at least the Smithsonian's Butterfly Garden down the street (9th & Constitution), thereby creating pollinator habitat that could be part of a corridor, fostering biodiversity and a sense of place. I'd like to see all of the buildings have green roofs, landscaped in native plants and green walls. I'd like to see all the buildings earn LEED AND Energy Star ratings and the site earn LEED-ND. I agree that we do NOT need another large theater venue (and we need to support the National Theater).

What we could use is something akin to Chicago's Center for Green Technology to do research and education on the technologies I mentioned above and more. It could be combined with the library.

Master Plan Design Concepts Station (cont'd)

The city should create some "environmental guidelines" for the site similar to those of Battery Park City (attached). Those "guidelines" are mandatory whereas LEED is a rating system, but they are based upon LEED and mandate to a LEED Gold level.

I'm attaching the specifications for Teardrop Park with the hopes you will implement similar ones in creating our park(s) on the site. I'd like to suggest that you look at Tim Beatley's Green Urbanism (Island Press) to get more examples of what cities are doing around the world. I am hoping my friends in the Sierra Club will also chime in. Finally, I'm attaching the article I wrote for Urban Land on "Greening Downtown Greens" that I mentioned to you. I hope you will not just pass these comments on but take them to heart yourself.

6. I am a long-time resident of Washington and environs. I work in sustainable real estate and have a background in commercial real estate investment management, so I am keenly interested in the Old Convention Center site.

My sense is that a mixed-used project emphasizing pedestrian-oriented, residential space, retail space, perhaps a moderately-sized office component (to ensure daytime use), and vital public spaces would be the 'highest and best' use for the site. The residential uses would appropriately incorporate condominium and rental space, with the latter including an affordable housing component. The inclusion of a mix of uses would, or so one would hope, create a 24-hour community that would further anchor Washington's East End and serve as an additional hub of activity for the city.

Ideally, the project would integrate park and recreational spaces with entertainment and restaurant features that would serve as a draw for the public. A lively streetscape that includes cafes, gardens, ground floor retail uses, and seating would be ideal. Inclusion of arts-related uses or spaces for performances would also be welcome.

As a long-time resident of the Washington area, I would personally appreciate a project that incorporates sustainable design and construction, memorable landscaping, and a sense of community. While the District of Columbia has marvelous public spaces, we have been less successful in creating the "sense of place" often found in European neighborhoods. Design and use features that would encourage a lively street life, both during the day and after dark, would be superb.

Transportation Station

1. If we were considering altering the DC Circulator routes to pass by the site, and if so, could we remove the left turns at Mt. Vernon Square from the route?
2. Were there any plans for bus shelters at the site, and if so, could public art space be provided? 1 location for bus shelters could be 9th street.
3. Several residents expressed they're favor for the median extensions on NY Ave. at 10th street.
4. One person commented on the phasing of the streets and when they will be open compared to the buildings.
5. One person complained about how on-street parking and taxi stands can disrupts through traffic on commuter routes. He expressed desire that the external streets be kept clean and that this activity be moved to internal streets.

Transportation Station (cont'd)

6. The only thing I heard was from residents who live north of the project and don't want to see 10th street become a thru street. I told them about the possibility of the median on NY Ave. through the intersection and they were satisfied. There were only 3 persons who made the comment to me: a married couple and a single guy.

Retail Station

1. Development team should consider developing one large building to envelope entire site, putting all public and retail space on the roof to take advantage of views. "There will never be any exciting street life with DC's wide streets, filled with large trucks and buses."
2. (Multiple comments on this subject) Project should showcase local shops and cafes and should accommodate them with smaller spaces and affordable rents.
3. The project needs a locally-owned, natural foods store, like "My Organic Market," not a big store like Whole Foods.
4. The project should feature free public services, such as a school that teaches trades and skills to the community for free, or a YMCA. "Downtown doesn't need more retail."
5. "I'm interested in opening a shop that sells organic products. What are the criteria for selecting tenants. What is the timeframe. Whom do I talk to when the timing is closer?" (Gave her WJE card and the website for the project. Gave her a few names of people in the business to call for advice on starting a business like hers.)
6. Local woman interested in a jazz club. Gave her a WJE card.
7. Had many express interest in the design of the project as it relates to parking. They want plenty of parking, both garage & street, at a reasonable rate. Also expressed interest in having valet parking.
8. Had people express interest in the ally concept (intimate neighborhood). It was more important than the library or a department store.
9. A single Mom asked me what kind of activities and programs would be sponsored by the ownership. She said that her experience with new major projects like this meant very limited offerings in the way of "low cost or no cost" activities. This is a good observation for who ever is selected for project programmatic activities, being sure to incorporate low and no cost events.