

Joint Meeting of the Howard University Community Advisory Committee and the Community Campus Plan Task Force

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

15 December 2010

Attendees

Mr. Richard Myers, President, LeDroit Park Civic Association
Mr. Lawrence Guyot, Ledroit Park Civic Association Dr. Earl Trent,
Pastor, Florida Avenue Baptist Church
Mr. Tony Norman, Chair, ANC 1B Design Committee and Member, Georgia Avenue
Community Development Task Force
Ms. Sylvia Robinson, Executive Director, Emergence Community Arts Collective
Ms. Anita Rice, LeDroit Park Civic Association
Mr. Tim Kissler, Castlerock LLC, Developer, Howard Town Center
Mr. Brad Grant, Director, Howard University School of Architecture
Ms. Diane Branch, Assoc. Vice President for Real Estate and Asset Management
Ms. Susan McKenzie, Asst. for Congressional Affairs, Ofc. of the Senior Vice President
Dr. Hassan Minor, Sr. Vice President for Strategic Planning and External Affairs
Mr. Troy Stovall, Howard University Chief Operating Officer
Mr. Omowale Crenshaw, Director Capital Asset Development,
Mr. Jacob Ortiz, Associate Director, Howard University Community Association
Ms. Kyieda Rogers, Site Manage Jumpstart AmeriCorps Program
Ms. Marian Jones, Admin. Assistant, Howard University Community Association
Ms. Maybelle Taylor Bennett, Director, Howard University Community Association

Meeting Highlights

The meeting began with introductions around the room and Dr. Minor introducing the Howard University Chief Operating Officer, Troy Stovall and Troy Stovall introducing the Director of Capital Asset Development, Omowale Crenshaw.

Maybelle Taylor Bennett introduced Tim Kissler, Principal of Castlerock LLC, and one of the developers of the Howard Town Center.

Howard Town Center (HTC)

Mr. Kissler reported that over the last year, leasing and sub-surface investigations have been taking place. He discussed the fact that while little appears to be taking place, a lot of preparation behind the scenes has been going on. He was constrained in being able to talk about the potential tenants for the project by confidentiality agreements, so no names of lessees were shared. He used his Gallery Place experience as an example of how projects like these often get off to a slow start. There, it took some six years to line up financing for the development, which turned out to be an important, successful development for the revitalization of downtown.

Kissler said that he anticipated proceeding with ongoing conversations with Howard University, where the question of how the HTC is wrapped into the narrative of the campus plan is explored.

Tony Norman asked Mr. Kissler if the HTC were not now in the campus plan. Maybelle Bennett said that at the time, it was within the campus plan boundaries, but that the University wanted to have it taken out from within the boundaries because of the concern it might spark among potential financiers who see the campus plan regulations as too onerous.

Troy Stovall described the campus plan as less of a regulatory exercise and more of an experience, complete with student life, retail, residences, green space and pedestrian activity. Mr. Norman asked when the plan would be shared with the community, and when would the name of the grocery store tenant be revealed.

Tim Kissler responded that the grocery store is still up in the air, and each of the prospective grocery tenants have different plans, so that the plans for the HTC would largely depend upon which grocery tenant was finally selected. As for the exterior of the building, the original drawings submitted by Deveroux and Pernell have not changed. These are the drawings that the public has already seen. It is the interior set of plans that are mutable right now. The other retail uses contemplated for the ground floor spaces include: drug stores, restaurants and others. He estimated that 50% of the ground floor space will be pre-leased very soon, which is a requirement of the financiers with whom he is talking. By February or March, Mr. Kissler expects to be able to share the name of the grocery store that is coming and he should then also be able to share the plans for the remainder of the project.

Tony Norman said he wanted the HTC to stay within the campus plan boundaries. Without the HTC's inclusion within the boundaries he was concerned that the community had no way to hold Howard to its commitments to provide the uses scheduled to be included in the development. Anita Rice said that she was in agreement with Mr. Norman, after it was again explained that the community would have more of an opportunity to review the uses within the HTC if it remains within the campus plan than they would if it were not within the plan.

Dr. Minor said that as long as Tim Kissler is one of the developers, we can request that he come to the quarterly CAC meetings, which will give the community an opportunity to hold him to his commitments to develop what he says he will develop. The community, the University and Kissler himself have a stake in the success of the HTC project.

Lawrence Guyot said that he believes the University should use this planning opportunity to include in the process whatever opposition might exist to the plan.

Rev. Trent mentioned the fact that Howard's influence in the redevelopment of LeDroit Park caused a series of shifts in that neighborhood, and asked if the University had given any thought to the consequences that the development would have in the area once the HTC was up and running. He said that Howard University

is an engine in the neighborhood and a lot of things happen in the wake of the changes Howard makes.

Rev. Trent went on to tell the group that the Florida Avenue Baptist Church (FABC) has a lack of parking for its congregants, and that there was a time when the church had a working relationship with the Howard University Hospital (HUH), where the HUH allowed FABC congregants to use the parking lot on Sundays. That arrangement was terminated and the relationship with the church has deteriorated over time since then. What was most frustrating, was that the FABC continued to support HUH through the sponsorship of a fundraiser for HUH's Sickle Cell Center, and still, the HUH would not allow the congregants of FABC to park on the lot. Dr. Minor and Mr. Stovall indicated that they would follow-up with Rev. Trent about this issue.

Capital Asset Development

Omowale Crenshaw described his relationship with Howard as an alumnus who, upon returning to Howard, noted that Columbia Heights looked different, "U" Street looked different, but Howard's own environment looked much the same. He remembered Rev. Trent from the days when he was a student, from 1988 to 1992, and said that he was very much a part of the community.

He described his job as initially involving a lot of listening, and then trying to put into place a system where the functioning, look and feel of the University changes for the better over time. To this end, he described the comprehensive building assessment he was undertaking to address the backlog of deferred maintenance and the University's infrastructure needs. He said that there was \$500 million worth of work to do to bring Howard's facilities up to par.

In addition, he noticed that there were many things that needed attention in the public spaces that surround the University, such as the need for: bus shelters; signage; façade improvements; cleanliness; plantings, etc. He said that the University is looking into the creation of a business improvement district in order to address some of these issues.

Omowale Crenshaw also mentioned that he was taking a closer look at the adequacy of the Blackburn student activity center, and was expecting to have consultants make recommendations for its upgrade and expansion.

He described addressing a neighbor's complaint about the overspill of the stadium's lighting into the surrounding area, and how having walked the perimeter of the stadium, he was able to come to a resolution of the problem with some creative thinking. In the process he was also able to reduce the amount of energy the University was expending in pursuit of creating a safer environment.

Anita Rice brought to Mr. Crenshaw's attention the fact that the Howard Center workplace environment caused her to have to retire from Howard because it was causing her to be sick. She asked if safety were going to be a concern in the facility

assessments he and his team were undertaking. Mr. Crenshaw described what he was doing as an “extreme makeover,” and assured Ms. Rice that the assessment of the facilities include environmental health and safety issues.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.