

Marymount University Task Force
Meeting 2 | March 15, 2006
Minutes

In attendance:

Michael Foster, Task Force Chair, Planning Commission
Peter Fallon, Transportation Commission
Maxine Nagel, Donaldson Run Civic Association
Christine Smith, Old Dominion Civic Association
Pamela Gillen, Old Dominion Civic Association
Paul Michl, Rock Spring Civic Association
David Haring, Yorktown Civic Association
Ted Weihe, Yorktown Civic Association
David Parker, St. Mary's Episcopal Church
Peter Judge, Washington Golf
Loretta Seigley, VP Academics, Marymount University
Chris Domes, VP Enrollment Management & Student Affairs, Marymount University
Jim Bundschuh, President, Marymount University

Abby Denham, WCLET
Art Walsh, WCLET
Martin Wells, Wells
Robert Kohler, Wells
Chris Kabatt, Wells
Robert Atkinson, DCS Design
Steve Saff, DCS Design
Doug Carter, DCS Design

Vaughn Collins, neighbor
Ann Simpson, neighbor

Jill Griffin, Arlington County, CPHD
Robert Gibson, Arlington County, DES

The meeting started at 7:15 p.m.

Introductions

Mr. Foster asked for introductions around the room. Mr. Foster asked for any comments on the minutes to be forwarded to Jill Griffin, Arlington County CPHD staff (jmgriffin@arlingtonva.us).

Project Overview

After the introductions, Doug Carter, with DCS Design, provided an overview of the project in the context of comments from the first meeting. This included discussion of the loading areas and the alignment of the garage entrances.

Mr. Foster questioned the pedestrian bridge – whether it should be angled in toward the campus or taken straight across as currently indicated on the plans.

Staff Issues

Ms. Griffin elaborated on issues that still need to be addressed by the applicant such as the setbacks required by the Zoning Ordinance. Robert Gibson, Arlington County DES staff, stated concerns regarding the multi-modal aspects of the project – both pedestrian and vehicular. Mr.

Gibson also stated concerns about event management and the need for a strong parking management plan.

Groups & Civic Association Update

Mr. Foster asked the various task force representatives for a brief overview of their respective viewpoints.

St. Mary's (David Murphy)

Mr. Murphy explained that the church did not have the opportunity to thoroughly discuss this project.

Donaldson Run (Maxine Nagle)

Ms. Nagle spoke of the neighborhood meeting held on February 22, 2006 at which the university presented the proposal. There was lively discussion with the 30 – 35 attendees but no true consensus was achieved. Ms. Nagle spoke of cautious optimism with numerous concerns. These concerns include: vehicular traffic patterns; pedestrian traffic and safety; density; project siting.

Peter Fallon, past-president of the Donaldson Run neighborhood, also commented on the neighborhood meeting. Mr. Fallon elaborated on the concerns that the project may overtax residential streets. Additionally, there were neighborhood concerns that the architecture may blend with the university but not necessarily with the rest of the neighborhood. Finally, Mr. Fallon asked why this particular site was chosen rather than other sites within the university.

The neighborhood will be meeting again on March 29, 2006.

Yorktown (David Haring)

Mr. Haring stated that the project was presented to the executive board of the civic association. The concerns of the Yorktown civic association are similar to those of Donaldson Run. There is concern of the increased traffic on Yorktown Boulevard with just the one garage entrance. The project is much more massive than what anyone really anticipated at this location. Yorktown also wants to make sure that any concerns of St. Mary's church are accommodated.

Rock Spring (Paul Michl)

Mr. Michl reiterated that there is not a full civic association to address this proposal. At this time he did not foresee any real concerns.

Washington Golf (Peter Judge)

Mr. Judge stated that Washington Golf did not have any issues at the present time.

Old Dominion (Pamela Gillen)

The full civic association is meeting in April and she will be able to give more feedback after that meeting.

Zoning/Use Permit

Prior to moving to the new discussion items, Mr. Foster wanted to clarify that the use permit did not permit modifications of the zoning regulations.

Site Design & Characteristics

Doug Carter, one of the project architects, reviewed the university master plan. He stated that the goal was to "husband" the open area within the main campus. Neighbors had been consulted about the proposed parking garage at the subject site. After further analysis, the architects and the university determined that it made sense to combine uses.

Loretta Seigley, Marymount University staff, stated that building additions didn't make that much sense for several reasons. First, new construction with older buildings would not provide all of the elements needed. Second, the disruption to these older buildings would be significant and discussions with other universities that had attempted such construction dissuaded Marymount University.

Mr. Foster suggested that the discussion continue regarding the USE. He also brought up the topic of other sites within the university that could accommodate this proposal.

Ted Weihe stated that he had discussions with the architect of the first parking garage and was informed that the garage could support an additional level of parking. This could provide additional phasing opportunities for the university.

Mr. Fallon stated that all of the neighborhoods seemed to raise similar issues. He suggested that the overall density/massing could be reduced if a level was removed.

Transportation

Staff and Mr. Foster determined that it would be beneficial to discuss transportation issues next.

Marty Wells stated that typically campus planning attempts to place parking at the periphery because main campuses are pedestrian-oriented.

Mr. Weihe asked if the university could work to get more cars off of the main campus to encourage pedestrian activity.

Mr. Wells discussed the parking availability at the university. He also discussed the parking garage entrance. The location allows for maximum safety and allows for ample stacking to the Yorktown Boulevard/26th Street N intersection. He stated that most traffic would head toward 26th Street North. This street doesn't work as well right now however the addition of new traffic signals will help the operations.

Mr. Carter asked about a garage entrance onto 26th Street North. Mr. Wells explained that existing stacking on 26th Street North may backup to an entrance. Additionally, any entrance may not provide enough distance from the Yorktown Boulevard intersection to provide a safe entrance. Finally, such an entrance would "chew" up the ground floor spaces of the proposed building.

Mr. Weihe asked about garage operations. Specifically, he stated the need for a parking management plan to account for the flow of traffic. He also asked about the median strip on Yorktown Boulevard and the need to make sure that all truck maneuvers would function.

Ms. Gillen stated that she appreciated how the parking garage fit into the site. She did question the 38% increase in p.m. traffic at the intersection and where this additional traffic was from. The neighborhood residents often have difficulty making left turns from the side streets on to Old Dominion Drive. Her concern is what impact the signal at 26th Street N will have within the neighborhood.

There was discussion about the traffic distribution throughout the network. Both Old Dominion Drive and Glebe Road have 25% of the traffic and the net additional traffic will be distributed the same way.

Mr. Gibson stated that because the access point of the garage is on Yorktown – 90% of the net additional traffic will be at the 26th Street North & Yorktown Boulevard intersection.

Mr. Fallon asked about the loading dock. It was confirmed that the loading area was full-sized, trucks would not overhang the sidewalk and the trucks would be servicing this building only. He suggested that further analysis of the 26th Street North & Yorktown Boulevard intersection may be helpful.

Mr. Fallon also asked about the existing shuttle service. It is not anticipated that the shuttle service will be decreased. He also questioned existing metro ridership. Mr. Wells indicated that he was uncertain as to the exact metro ridership.

Mr. Gibson stated that the traffic analysis was based on spaces being 100% occupied. He questioned what the current unmet demand is and whether this proposal will meet the demand or whether it may be over capacity.

Mr. Wells explained the calculations and assumptions (existing spaces (691) + overflow at the church parking lot & in the neighborhood (75) + event (100) + 10% vacancy (87)). There would be no net increase.

Mr. Haring asked about the allocation. He questioned why the pattern would stay the same if there was increased volume at the 26th Street North & Yorktown Boulevard intersection. He posited that traffic may come up George Mason Drive to Yorktown Boulevard in the garage. Mr. Wells suggested that additional sensitivity analysis may be appropriate in the traffic impact analysis.

Ms. Gillen asked about shared parking opportunities between students/employees and the auditorium events. She suggested that shared parking opportunities could still encourage multimodal transportation.

Mr. Fallon stated that the footprint of the project is the entire site. He asked about construction phasing and possible, temporary, lane closures. He suggested that the university needs to manage these expectations.

Mr. Weihe suggested that some overflow parking is not being accounted for along Yorktown Boulevard, Brandywine and Rixey streets.

Building Architecture

Mr. Foster focused the discussion on the visibility of the building and its presentation to the neighbors and the community. He asked about the key architectural components, the materials, the mass and the rhythm of the building.

Mr. Carter explained that the Yorktown Boulevard frontage presents to the university. The 26th Street North & Old Dominion Drive has both classrooms and labs. Internal to the design are the auditorium, the student commons and a snack bar. The creation of the small “European-style” street provides a cut-through and a separation of the uses. He explained that the relationship to the neighborhood reflected a mesh of internal and external elements.

Academic – large scale masonry details and a strong entry feature to convey a sense of stability and strength with openness.

Yorktown – least impact to the community as it faces the existing parking garage.

Church – strong stone work

Mr. Carter suggested that there was not a common theme to the neighborhood so the architects looked more closely at the university with the white stucco and red tile and metal roofs.

The building was designed with a rhythm to break up the façade. Further, the façade along Yorktown is curved so that the façade will not be viewed at once.

Mr. Foster brought forth an idea about the Tiffany stained glass windows that were recently salvaged. Several of the windows have been restored and are displayed at the Maury Arts Center. One window, with religious overtones and which needs extensive restoration, remains in storage. Perhaps the Marymount project will provide an opportunity to showcase this additional window.

Mr. Weihe asked about the width of sidewalks. The sidewalks are 16' on Old Dominion Drive, 15' on 26th Street North and 20' on Yorktown Boulevard.

Christine Smith asked where the psychological entrance of the university is located. Loretta Seigley stated that currently there are multiple entrances into the university. The proposed building will help to define the entrance – but will not be the only entrance. It was noted that while the new building will establish a gateway – it will still be symbolic as it will not have much pedestrian traffic.

Ms. Gillen stated that the community does appreciate Marymount University and that the project is interesting. However, she suggested that this project may be more appropriate for the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor – with building to the back of sidewalks. In this particular context more open space may be appropriate – perhaps the corner could have more of an open appearance. The building could be scaled back at the corners and green space could be increased. Additionally, Ms. Gillen suggested that entrances could be incorporated into the dormitory rooms fronting Yorktown Boulevard. This could allow more interest along Yorktown Boulevard.

Mr. Haring agreed with Ms. Gillen's comments for the building along Yorktown Boulevard. Mr. Haring questioned all of the access points of this proposed building.

Mr. Judge stated that the idea of a Tiffany window at this location is exciting and it could provide a way to get the community into the university.

Mr. Michl asked for clarification of the color of the stucco at the next meeting.

Mr. Weihe stated that this site is somewhat isolated and suggested that an archway connecting this proposed building to the rest of the campus might be dramatic.

Mr. Foster commented on this idea and suggested the university look at the DaVinci Bridge example. There may be a patron within the community to achieve such a bridge.

Mr. Fallon stated that the building may be incorporating too much of the university into this building; that there is too much red and white. The functional entrance of the building is the garage through the elevators. The symbolic entrance is appropriate however does not activate the street. Mr. Fallon suggested that the activity should be brought to the outside. Perhaps the

auditorium could be more prominent at the corner to pull the public into the university. Mr. Fallon has some concerns about the entrance at the intersection of 26th Street N and Old Dominion Drive because of the traffic.

Ms. Nagle asked if the elevations could be cut by landscaping. Mr. Carter stated that landscaping was discussed however the university has to keep student safety and security in mind.

Mr. Weihe asked about ventilation. It was explained that ventilation would be through the elevator shafts.

Mr. Parker stated that the Tiffany windows would be for the broader community and the community would be grateful to the university if possible.

Mr. Foster explained that the architects did a good job in breaking up the dormitories. This same approach should be used to de-institutionalize the corner as it appears as though it is a "heavy duck on spindly legs." Perhaps the theater should be pulled to the street. Facades should be more articulated. Much of the university has residential scaled buildings and this building should have such a transition as well.

Sustainable Design

Mr. Weihe emphasized the importance of sustainable design (LEED elements) for institutions and that it can create a better building. Innovative credits may be earned for educational elements.

Wrap-Up

Mr. Foster thanked the neighbors for their participation in the meeting and opened the meeting to their comments and/or questions.

Ms. Simpson, a nearby neighbor, stated that she lives on 26th Street North and has concerns about 300 new neighbors in both the density and the activity. Traffic is also a concern. Mr. Foster followed-up and asked whether there could be additional analysis of how the traffic patterns would change if this proposal was located on a different site within the university.

Mr. Collins, a nearby neighbor, stated he is a recent resident of Arlington County having moved from Falls Church. He commented that the proposed density is offensive and asked whether it was necessary to meet all of the needs of the university on this small site.

Mr. Collins also mentioned that an adjacent property may be for sale in the near future and asked if the university had thought about acquiring the property.

Mr. Foster concluded the meeting and stated that the task force should be ready to think about a thorough conclusion based on all of the questions and items discussed to forward to the County Board and other commissions.

The task force determined its next meeting to be on Thursday, April 20 at 7 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Board Room in the Reinsch Library at Marymount University. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.