

December 16, 2003

MEMORANDUM

To: Campus Planning Committee (CPC)

From: Christine Taylor Thompson, Planning Associate

University Planning

Subject: Record of Campus Planning Committee meeting,

December 9, 2003

Attending: Carole Daly (Chair), G. Z. Brown, Nancy Cheng, Garry Fritz,

Cynthia Girling, Bryn Hammond Anderson, Gregg Lobisser,

Chris Loschiavo, Gordon Melby, Stephen Owen, Steve Pickett,

Chris Ramey, Michael Stamm, Christine Theodoropoulos, Mick Westrick

Guests: Mike Eyster (Housing), Mark Foster (ZGF), Larry Gilbert (CMGS),
Tim King (Facilities Services), Anne Leavitt (Student Affairs),
Rand Stamm (DPS), Fred Tepfer (UPO), Nancy Wright (Housing)

Staff: Christine Thompson (University Planning)

Agenda: Development Policy for the East Campus Area - Update

User Groups - Updates

Living Learning Center - Preliminary Comments

1. Development Policy for the East Campus Area - Update

Staff said the East Campus policy adopted earlier in the year by the CPC is proceeding through the city's land-use process. The city's Planning Commission held a public hearing November 18, 2003, which will be followed by a series of work sessions. The City Council, after receiving the Planning Commission's recommendation, will make a final decision likely some time in March 2004. If the city proposes substantive changes to the policy, it will come back to the CPC for review.

2. User Groups - Updates

Steve Pickett, CPC representative on the Student Health and Counseling Center User Group, said an architect has been selected and contract negotiations are under way. CPC chair asked Chris Ramey, University Planning, to report on the Campus Heart project in the absence of Gary Seitz. Chris said the Campus Heart User Group has begun to meet. A student design/build studio class will be held spring term 2004 to create a design. Construction will take place during the summer.

3. Living Learning Center - Preliminary Comments

Background: The CPC chair explained that the purpose of this agenda item is to solicit preliminary input on the Living Learning Center schematic design. The project will come back to the CPC at a later date for schematic design review.

Staff summarized the applicable Long Range Campus Development Plan (LRCDP) patterns and policies. She reviewed the open-space data in the area diagnosis study.

Adjacent to the Living Learning Center site are There are two designated open spaces: the EMU promenade and the north/south cross axis along the west side of the tennis courts. The width of the cross-axis (from the eastern face of Earl Hall to the Tennis Court retaining wall) is sixty-three feet. Staff encouraged the CPC to especially consider the LRCDP patterns addressing open spaces and siting during this initial review.

Staff clarified that the site has been approved by Administration with the understanding that the increase in density will be mitigated through a number of options described in the letter from Administration (Dan Williams and Anne Leavitt) contained in the meeting mailing.

Fred Tepfer, project planner from University Planning, described the concept of a living learning center and reviewed the project's design process as described in the meeting mailing (and at prior CPC meetings). He said a successful project must fit in with the character of the UO campus. He reviewed the project requirements identified in the letter from Administration:

- Try to reduce the impact of the increased floor-area density through a number of options (e.g., remodel Walton Hall, use basement space, and remove existing density during future phases),
- make the design part of the whole site,
- ensure that the maximum allowed coverage density is not exceeded,
- make opportunities to increase learning spaces during future phases, and
- recognize the significance of a prime, central location by ensuring a quality building with long-term use flexibility.

In answer to a member's question, Fred said there is not a typical proportion of living versus learning in living learning facilities. Fred added that the new building will leverage other living-learning opportunities in the nearby residence halls.

Mark Foster, project architect from ZGF Architects, described the current design schemes as shown on site plans presented at the meeting. He said the project's Design Advisory Committee worked through four or five initial schemes to get to this point.

Mark said the character of the proposed open space is designed to have a relationship with the open space framework that defines the academic portion of the campus rather than the existing housing area where buildings are designed as objects and "dropped on" the site.

Mark said he will present the first phase of the project, which consists of new construction on the tennis court site. However, later phases are anticipated that would renovate existing residence halls. The building's relatively large size is necessary to provide flexibility needed for the future renovation of existing residence halls. The added room capacity will

allow portions of the older buildings to be closed down while renovations are completed.

Mark said the building size was originally about 142,000 - 143,000 gsf when the CPC last discussed the Living Learning Center site options (at its July 21, 2003 meeting). It contained 414 beds, a café, six offices, six study rooms, three classrooms, and a performance space. Since then, the number of beds has been reduced to 399, and a classroom and a meeting room have been added.

Mark said the complex's ground floors will be used primarily for non-residential uses and the upper floors for residential housing. The two U-shaped buildings create a large, central open space and two smaller courtyards. The circulation of the site is designed to feed into a central café. The café forms the north edge of a newly created east/west open space, and a new performance/classroom space defines the south edge. This new, central open space extends east to Walton Hall and west to Earl Hall (and the existing cross-axis). The courtyards are oriented so that one faces north opening to the EMU promenade and the other faces south opening to 15th Avenue.

Discussion: A member expressed concern that the first phase does not include any remodeling of existing buildings to mitigate density concerns. He asked when the later phases will occur. Mike Eyster, Housing, explained that Housing is an auxiliary and, therefore, it must be self-supporting. He clearly recognizes that all existing campus housing (all of which is 40-50 years old) must eventually be renovated. However, it is not possible to determine a specific timeline because the ability to proceed with future phases depends upon budgetary issues that can quickly change. A member asked if this means Housing is unable to meet the directives defined in the letter from Administration. Mike said he did not believe the letter required specific actions. A guest added that the intent is to try to ensure that the current project won't preclude future opportunities to make improvements to existing buildings and the rest of campus.

Staff said the CPC often reviews projects that are proposed in phases. The CPC should review the proposed first phase of the Living Learning Center as a stand-alone project. It must meet the LRCDP policies as proposed. This can include assurances that the design enhances the potential for future opportunities, but approval cannot assume future phases will occur.

A member was concerned that the proposed new open space would not be a "campus" open space as described because residential housing would surround it on all sides. It would have no connection to a more public space such as Agate Street. Mark agreed that the new open space should not be isolated like the Bean Courtyard. He believes this will not occur because it would be directly accessible via the north/south cross-axis along the western edge, which is used by residents and the entire campus community.

A member said campus open spaces are typically defined on two sides by cross axes. Members and guests discussed the potential for creating an east/west connection from Agate Street through Walton Hall, the new open space, and Straub Hall to the Straub quadrangle. Fred said the project currently envisions future phases providing pedestrian connections to Agate Street where pedestrian crossings currently exist: at the 15th Avenue intersection and the mid-block crossing. A variety of options and opinions were voiced.

A member suggested flipping the north U-shaped building so that the east/west bar defines and faces the EMU promenade. This would also create a sunny courtyard instead of an unused north-facing courtyard.

A member said a well-designed building will be a real improvement to the site. She asked for information about how existing trees will be affected and how parking will be addressed. She shared the stated concerns about a north-facing courtyard. She added that she questioned the effectiveness of two separate courtyards.

In response to a question, Mark said the performance space will allow and encourage people to walk through the space. This is true for all public spaces on the ground floor (entrances will be open to all campus users). Fred and Mike confirmed that the classrooms will be in the general classroom pool.

A member said he did not see a need to establish a connection through Earl and Straub Halls. Other access routes are available.

A member explained that not all open spaces are designed to be thoroughfares. Most importantly, open spaces are formed by buildings and establish the campus character. He expressed serious concerns about the proposed increase in density to the area and looks forward to resolving this in future phases.

A member said the proposed design does not appear to resolve density issues. In fact the proposal encroaches upon both adjacent designated open spaces. He said it seems the CPC has continually given in as this project has progressed.

Larry Gilbert, project landscape architect from CMGS, said the proposed design encroaches into the north/south cross axis about fifteen feet. There is also a minor intrusion into the EMU promenade. Fred added that because the siting has just been established, issues are still being resolved. These intrusions could be addressed before completion of schematic design.

A member shared stated concerns about encroaching into the designated open spaces especially since these open spaces will become more important as development increases their use.

Larry described the preliminary landscape plan. He said the site is designed with the understanding that the EMU Promenade should remain the dominant open space. The original design considered a building fronting the promenade, but later it was moved back due to concerns about a four-story building shading the dominant open space. In answer to an earlier question, Larry said the width of the new, central open space will be about the same as the width between Huestis and Deschutes Halls.

Larry said he identified existing trees that may be impacted by construction. Along the EMU promenade, the Cedar is the most significant tree that would be removed. In addition, a large tree along 15th Avenue would be removed. In total, about eight to nine trees would be removed. However, the project's landscape design could realistically replace the lost canopy.

Larry recommends that the finished floor elevation match Walton Hall, ensuring easy access between the new buildings and Walton Hall. However, this will result in tricky elevation changes along the EMU promenade where the finished floor elevation will be lower than the existing walkway. The proposal would realign the walkway to the north side of the existing trees and slope the terrain down to meet the ground-floor level. The realigned walkway would line up with the future EMU east entrance.

A member asked why one wing of the building facing the EMU Promenade is longer than the other (and intrudes into the open space). Earlier designs had a nice rhythm along the promenade that related to Walton Hall; the current design does not. Mark said the different lengths allow both wings to be visible from the EMU. It breaks up the plan and makes the north courtyard appear more accessible and open to the campus.

A member said she was concerned not about the increase in density but about open spaces and views. As shown, the project is dependent upon future changes to Earl and Walton Halls to create the desired effect.

A member agreed that density was not the primary concern. She said she would much rather build up to preserve ground open space.

A member said the café should have transparency and serve as a pass through similar to the performance space.

A member said she understood some of the reasons for the orientation of the U-shaped buildings, but does not think shading the EMU promenade is a problem. The promenade serves as a corridor rather than a place to stop and hang out like the proposed courtyard. Flipping the U-shaped building would reinforce the EMU corridor by defining the edge and creating activity along it. In addition, it would be possible to improve the Carson Hall

entrance, which does not function well. Mark said that Larry has suggested a similar approach, and they will look at options. Another member suggested moving the lower bar of the U-shape building north to create an H-shape.

A member urged a reduction in overall density during the second phase. Mark said the current design has a coverage ratio of .29 (.3 is the maximum allowed) and a floor area ratio of .96 (.8 is the maximum allowed).

The CPC chair said the committee needs to clarify the level of concern it has with the proposal to encroach into the designated open spaces before the project proceeds.

Staff agreed stating that any construction within a designated open space would require an amendment to the LRCDP, which would take some advance planning. She needs to know if she should schedule the required notification and public hearing process.

In response to a member's question, staff said, the designated open spaces are defined by a map in the LRCDP. Although the map is not fine-scaled, it is clear that the specific size of open spaces is established primarily by building facades. Construction has occurred one time within a designated open space and a LRCDP amendment was required. This occurred when the Gilbert bridge was demolished and the new construction was allowed to replace it with the understanding that the designated open space (Dad's Gate axis) would be enhanced by this action.

A member confirmed that the committee feels very strongly about preserving open spaces, in particular the north/south cross axis. Buildings should not encroach upon open spaces.

A member said the committee should not become too bound by established protocol if it compromises the building design. If the building is forced into a pre-defined space, the interior spaces will be compromised.

Staff explained that when the open spaces were established in 1991, some were already clearly defined (e.g., the Memorial quadrangle), and others were not (e.g., the north/south axis near Music and Education, most of which is currently a parking lot). The plan's premise was to clearly define open spaces in advance so that as development occurred the open spaces would be enhanced over time. Multiple buildings define open spaces, so a build-to line must be established so that each building will eventually join with others to define the open space. If a proposed change is considered for one project, the overall effect for the entire open space framework should be considered.

A member said the project design should be able to solve these problems.

Action: No formal action was required. The committee will forward its comments noted in

the meeting record to those involved in the project's design.

Please contact this office if you have questions.

cc. Mike Eyster, Housing

Mark Foster, ZGF

Larry Gilbert, CMGS

Becky Goodrich, Straub Building Manager

Tim King, Facilities Services

Anne Leavitt, Student Affairs

Steve Nystrom, Eugene Planning

Rand Stamm, Public Safety

Karen Sprague, Undergraduate Studies

Fred Tepfer, University Planning

Dan Williams, Administration

Lew Williams, Foundation

Nancy Wright, University Housing (DAG chair)