

MEETING NOTES

TO: Bill Lanning/Michael Willis Architects

FROM: Jane Hansen

DATE: June 13, 2009

PROJECT: Hillsdale Terrace Housing Redevelopment

RE: Community Design Workshop #1

ATTENDEES: Residents, Neighbors and Community Partners - Joanne Hoffart, neighbor; Rick Nitti, Neighborhood House; Fran Barth, volunteer with Multnomah Presbyterian Church; Brian Sheehan, City of Portland Planning; Austin Waltz, computer lab volunteer; HDT residents: Jim Kinney, Cindy Kinney, Nancy Kinney, Mr. and Mrs. Gonzales; Estella Moron

HAP Staff and Consultants - Julie Livingston, Mike Andrews, Pamela Kambur, Miriam Demezas /HAP; Michael Willis, Bill Lanning, Brad Bane/Michael Willis Architects; Jane Hansen/Lango Hansen Landscape Architects; Beverly Bookin/The Bookin Group; Francesca Gambetti/Shiels Obletz Johnson

After the first Open House event earlier in the week, the first community workshop focused on design was held from 9am to 12 pm at Hillsdale Terrace. Participants were encouraged to complete a community questionnaire before leaving today (this information will be compiled with that collected at the first Open House.)

Julie Livingston welcomed the group and began with a round of introductions. She stated that the goal of this workshop was to surface concerns and come up with good ideas for design of what this project might look like in the future. She stated that HUD had not released the notice of funding (NOFA) yet, which may effect the dates of upcoming public meetings. Currently, the next two meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Second community design workshop, July 2
 - August 6 – Public open house, August 6
- (*EDITOR'S NOTE:* The last week in June, postcards were mailed to let participants know that HAP would postpone these events until after the release of the NOFA.)

Julie stated that HAP intends to apply for a HOPE VI grant to fully redevelop the property which would include \$20,000,000 in seed money, and that everything would be torn down and rebuilt. The future project would include all new buildings with different types of units, landscaping, and stormwater management. She said that currently there are 60 three-bedroom apartments, and this doesn't comply with City of Portland zoning standards, and that the future redevelopment would need to allow for more units. She re-emphasized the request for people to fill out the questionnaire, and that they could also go on HAP's website to comment on the project.

Michael Willis (MW) introduced himself as the workshop facilitator and stated that the goal of this workshop was to bring out all the issues now that people have with the existing conditions that may be addressed in the design of new housing and grounds. He stated that aspiration of this project is to create a new community.

Bill Lanning (BL) gave an overview of existing conditions, mentioning that the design team had analyzed the site from its physical point of view looking at pedestrian and vehicular connections, topography, as well as charting amenities nearby. He stated that the number of services located

nearby was a great starting point, but acknowledged that the site's topography and existing pedestrian and vehicular connections caused difficulties.

Bill mentioned that the site was 6.25 acres and per the city zoning code will require greater density in its redesign: at a minimum 109 units, and at a maximum 136 units. However in this amount there could be a range of types of housing including senior housing, family housing, single person housing. Michael Willis added that there are different parking requirements for each type of housing as well.

Bill Lanning used Humboldt Gardens as an example of a project utilizing different types of housing in different areas. Michael Willis stated that at Humboldt Gardens there had also been an effort to make the housing look like the rest of the community and that the design of open space and play areas had been an important part of that design. Brad Bane said that the ideas for the play areas had been a direct result of ideas that came from the community during the design workshops, because it had been noted in the workshops how little parkland there was existing in that neighborhood.

Michael Willis noted that there were many challenges to be solved at the Hillsdale Terrace site, including moisture infiltration in units, stormwater management, pedestrian accessibility. However, there were wonderful advantages to the site as well, including: the number of services in the neighborhood, the quietness of the site due to its bowled topography, that Mt. Hood could be seen from site if view corridors were opened up. He asked the group how do we take advantage of it?

MW: What happens in a heavy rain storm?

- Water ponds in the center area and that it takes awhile for it to dissipate.
- Another issue is that the steep driveways get frosty and slick and it is impossible to get out in bad weather (water runs down driveway and then freezes)

Michael Willis then went through the questionnaires that had been completed so far, reading responses to questions posed:

What are your three favorite things about living in the Multnomah/Hillsdale area?

- Easy to get to work
- Community center, including pool
- Kids and schools
- Trees
- Ability to get to things easily: Multnomah Village, Hillsdale Shopping Center, downtown Portland
- Accessibility to buses
- Not much crime
- Small town feel
- Great schools
- Homework club
- Library
- Computer lab here

What are your favorite places to go in the Multnomah/Hillsdale area?

- SW Community Center/pool
- Starbucks
- Multnomah Village
- Corner store
- Library
- Farmers Market
- Hayhurst School
- Little league
- Shops
- Gabriel Park
- Neighbors
- Fred Meyer

What are three things that concern you or that you don't like about the area?

- Not enough sidewalks
- Danger to walk in center (?)
- Need more teenager stuff
- Middle of nowhere
- How people talk about us
- Increase in crime
- Teenagers causing trouble
- Difficult going in and out of traffic at Vermont
- Difficult for parents to attend school functions without transportation
- Smoking
- Negative verbal language
- Can't get out when it snows
- Negative youth activities

What are three things about Hillsdale Terrace you would like to change if the property is redeveloped with a HOPE VI grant?

- More than 1 bathroom
- No brick (cmu) walls
- Not so many stairs
- More trees
- Easier access to ground floor
- Community garden
- Bigger kitchen
- Raise grades
- Security cameras
- Fenced community
- Programs for youth
- Access to technology
- Pick up refuse
- Place buildings to block noise from basketball courts
- Remove basketball courts
- Care for environment
- More playgrounds
- More outings for kids
- More parking
- Clinic for residents
- Added way to get out of apartments
- Better screening of units

What do you envision Hillsdale Terrace could look like in 5 years?

- Humboldt Gardens
- Not green and pink
- Concern that it won't get rebuilt
- Green, well kept
- People take pride in where they live
- Good looking buildings and landscaping
- Enough parking for residents and guests

Are there other neighborhoods or places in Portland that you really like? What do you like about them?

- Like SW Portland, good for me and family, quiet with no gangs, able to walk to grocery store, like houses with porches
- NW Portland – calm, a lot of transportation types, people are nice there
- Not like here

MW: Asked the group to discuss existing access issues:

- Getting to bus is simple

- Impossible to get out on Vermont in morning and afternoon from 3-6 because traffic is so heavy at those times
- Access from another street would be great
- Capital Highway is a popular alternative to I-5 which causes the heavy traffic
- Crosswalk at 26th and Vermont is at a weird place because it is not at light. No light exists to stop traffic—closest light is at 35th.
- Middlemen Synagogue and School: Wednesday, Friday and Saturday are very heavy pedestrian traffic

MW: Have any of these issues been brought to the attention of agencies?

- Yes, but neighbors are unwilling to pay for improvements

MW: How do you get out?

- Path behind Cider Mill at diagonal or up 26th
- Kids have developed path through wooded area to open field by church where there is an ultimate Frisbee course
- A lot of informal pedestrian paths
- Sometimes Kesser Israel is fenced off and closed (when services are closed or children are out playing. They have installed fence around their property
- There was vandalism to the old brew pub fence (now Kesser Israel)
- Kesser Israel has been a great neighbor so far

BL: What are feelings of neighbors coming into site? He mentioned Humboldt Gardens as an example stating that before it was redeveloped neighbors didn't know if they could come onto site and that there was not a good indication of what was private and what was public.

- HOPE tries to bring neighbors together more
- Visitor parking is not working well
- Neighbors don't know where office is
- There is a problem with unwanted foot traffic coming through including teenagers that don't live there, people supplying drugs, strangers coming into play area and people walking dogs cutting through to California St.

BB: Do people use gravel path to California St.?

- It is a very popular pedestrian access
- Bus connection there: stops at market, goes to PCC, Multnomah Village, connects to other busses on Vermont that go to the community center and downtown Portland

MW: Is bus service okay or not?

- You are taking your life in your hands crossing from MJCC across Capitol Highway in late afternoon
- There is so much happening in one spot at 26th and Capitol Highway
- Surprised that there are not more accidents there
- Why isn't there a light there?
- Consider talking to SWEENY, it is an active transportation agency: coalition of SW neighborhoods

Bill Lanning responded that a light would be a sensible solution, and it is a viable discussion to have since the City of Portland is a partner and also it is an issue since the density will be going up.

MW: Is Fred Meyer close enough; are location of grocery stores adequate?

- Within a mile, if you have a car it is great
- Bus is okay, except Sunday when it doesn't run
- Not adequate if you are walking, topography makes it hard
- Little market close by is great but limited
- Hillsdale food coop is a 4 block walk, but is uphill there, downhill back with only partial sidewalks. Its prices are too high
- Thursdays there is a farmer's market in Multnomah Village and Sundays at Wilsonville High School, both are popular

MW: Are there issues/feedback from folks living on California Side?

- Church invited neighbors to kids fair
- New pastor does want to see if there are opportunities in partnering, particularly for undeveloped property adjacent to California.

MW: What about apartments, homes on west side?

- The U-shape apartments have their backs to the property so are not engaged with it, but neighbors have said they were delighted with redevelopment during canvassing efforts

MW: Let's talk internally, how is open space used? Are there conflicts with age groups? Is open space well used?

- There could be better use
- Young kids play early in the day, teens take over playgrounds in the evening
- There is nothing for teens to do (no services provided)
- Hopefully in new development there will be a teen game room with ping pong, pool tables, foosball
- There is an after school program

MW: Do parents with younger kids feel okay about using playground in day?

- Playground is good for really young kids, but nothing for middle school kids to do either
- Playground is dangerous for young kids after rain because it gets so muddy
- Open access for other people who don't live here makes it dangerous for kids
- Strangers come in walking dogs, offering cigarettes and candy to kids and teens—there have been a few complaints to management about this
- Living rooms do not face playgrounds. Also upper apartments can't see playgrounds so you don't know if your child has been hurt unless someone comes and tells you.
- Playing in football field, kids getting picked on, fights, accidents occur
- Teenagers will sit and drink, smoke pot under picnic shelter. Many don't actually live here but some tenants make their homes available to them, causing problems
- On any given night there are 15-30 teens hanging around. If an adult approaches they scatter, and then return to the same spot a half hour later

Brad Bane responded that these issues also came up at Humboldt Gardens and that unobservable walkways lead to a lot of these types of problems, creating hiding places. The answer is to redesign pathways and open areas so that there are a lot of "eyes" on them. Michael Willis added that that is a goal of this project: to make open spaces more observable.

Security and management issues were then discussed.

- There is some nonresponsiveness to problems by property management when problems are reported
- Cars have been vandalized
- Apartments broken into
- Residents cars have been towed
- From office there are site areas that cannot be seen (poor natural surveillance)

BB: Is there a sense of privacy in units?

- Paths in front and back, not a good sense of layering between public and private space
- Can have everything in apartments through adjacencies
- Is it possible in design to level property (response: probably cost prohibitive)
- Topography causes problems

BB responded that topography is one of the challenges of the property, and that environmentally it is a natural collection point for rainwater, so while we would have to maintain the general grades, the way the buildings are located could make the situation better.

- Units are moldy

Julie Livingston responded that moisture is an issue for everyone that lives here due to the cmu block construction. Goal of new project is to use better construction methods with better ventilation so mold is not a problem. Brad Bane added that the apartment uses that cause moisture will also be considered in design.

Michael Willis went through two site diagrams that had been developed to date, stating that they were preliminary but do begin to show different organizations of housing and open area, creating more eyes on the site. He stated that as these diagrams develop the design team will incorporate comments heard today. The goal will be to create as strategic of a HOPE VI application as possible to secure the necessary funding. He used Humboldt Gardens and New Columbia as model projects that improved the neighborhood for both residents and neighbors, stating that we want to raise the bar for what public housing can be, creating new neighborhood buildings.

Michael Willis then asked for a lightening round to get a mandate from the audience to summarize what was wanted from the new development:

- Build units so noise doesn't travel (design for noise impact)
- Bigger office space: more room and better visuals
- Easier accessibility to get out
- Another bathroom in units
- Window in kitchen
- Better playgrounds for kids, especially for toddlers
- Room for computer lab
- Areas for lots of kids, nice to see them play
- Likes plans, hop they get money to do it
- Visitor parking in one place and office should be close by
- Technology available for everyone here
- A game room for teens
- Bigger playground or add another one
- Concern about use of rubber mats in play areas leaching chemicals into ground
- Possibility of really terracing site so it is not one big bowl
- Stay away from CMU block, it also kills cellular reception
- Reduce isolation for residents with better passageways
- Add traffic light at 26th
- Would like to see residents more engaged in community
- Extra room inside units
- More green fields for kids
- Better organized parking areas with clear visitor parking area
- Two bathrooms in units

End of notes.