

Resource Access Center Development

Community Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes
January 08, 2009

CAC members attending:

John Baymiller (resident)	Misty Kiyuna (Veterans Administration)
Bud Clark, Co-Chair (TPI Board)	Thomas Lee (Transition Projects volunteer)
Harriet Cormack, Co-Chair (HAP Board)	Alexander Mace (OTCT Neighborhood Assoc.)
Kevin Earhart (TPI housing client)	Dorian Yee (OTCT Business Association)
Peter Englander (PDC)	Steven Ying (Chinese Consol. Bnv. Assoc.) (guest) Kevin Diaz (resident)

Project partners attending:

Kate Allen (City of Portland)	John Manson (HAP)
Mike Andrews (HAP)	Dianne Quast (HAP)
Robert Dell (HAP)	Dave Otte (Holst Architecture)
Rachael Devlin (HAP)	Sarah Harpole (PDC)
Rachael Duke (HAP)	Barbara Shaw (PDC)
Pamela Kambur (HAP)	Doreen Binder (TPI)
Julie Livingston (HAP)	Fern Elledge (TPI)

Co-Chairs Bud Clark and Harriet Cormack call the meeting to order at 5:42 p.m. Co-Chair Cormack notes that the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) had previously accomplished its goals, but had been invited to reconvene due to the circumstances surrounding the project. Attendees introduce themselves.

Review of project status

Michael Andrews notes that project team-member Holst Architecture was profiled in that morning's Oregonian newspaper, and that HAP is happy to have them on board. Changes in the low-income housing tax credit required changes in the project. HAP wanted to introduce those changes to the CAC to keep faith with its original work with the CAC. The CAC originally provided advice on the development's design and housing program. Both of those aspects of the project have changed, but changes were made with the project's primary goals in mind.

The four discrete elements of the project were the Resource Access Center (RAC), the 90-bed homeless shelter, affordable housing, and retail. The Midrise design option originally selected by the CAC (June 2008) included seven stories and concrete construction. To accommodate estimates that the cost of the original Midrise design would be over budget, the project proceeded with a six-story wood-construction design (September 2008). Eventually, changes in the financial market necessitated another review of the design.

New City Housing Commissioner's perspective

Nick Fish has taken office as the City Housing Commissioner since the CAC last met. Kate Allen, representing Nick Fish, says that the Commissioner felt that attention needed to be paid to the core elements of the project, the programs

associated with them, and how it all fit into the neighborhood. The project is important not only for its internal elements, but also for its prominence in a gateway-area to downtown. Commissioner Fish's commitment to the project was galvanized by his efforts to help out at shelters during recent severe weather.

Overview of design

Mike Andrews reviews that the previous design included 152 housing units on the whole block, with the RAC, retail, and the shelter. The design was based on investors paying 80 cents for every dollar of tax credit. Now investors want a higher return. We expect they will pay no more than 60 cents per dollar of credit—resulting in a \$4 million decrease in the project budget. Such a \$4 million disparity could not be countered through using alternative materials or other value engineering, necessitating the re-design.

Dave Otte of Holst Architecture tells attendees that square footage had to be cut to save money. Initially, the design was changed by removing a floor and other parts of the housing space along with some nonessential space in the RAC. The resulting building design was perceived by many to be “floppy”—poor urban design that did not maximize use of the site. However, because fewer housing units were now planned, the opportunity to reconfigure the building to fit on one half of the block (also reverting to concrete construction). The new configuration takes out the large courtyard for the housing from the top of the shelter and loses the retail space, which can be added in a second phase of the development that uses the other half of the block. The stacking of floors in the new design also makes the building more efficient since elevators, stairs and other components can be shared. The City was approached with the new design, which had 108 housing units, and they suggested adding another floor to compensate for the loss of housing units. Arrangements are being made to get \$1.5 million in additional funding from PDC to build the added floor. This will result in 130 housing units.

An attendee asks how the queuing problem is addressed. Julie Livingston of HAP draws attention to a handout that compares square footage for each element. There is still a courtyard for queuing, with an entrance off of Irving (which required some ramps to connect the courtyard with the street-level entrance). The entrance to the shelter is off of Broadway, closer to Hoyt Street. An attendee asks whether this means that the shelter will lose access to natural light. Dave Otte notes that the shelter courtyard will provide three walls of glass into the space in addition to windows near the entrance to the shelter. The west-facing windows will guarantee some light, since they would not be blocked by anything built on the rest of the block. Thus, the shelter's access to light will probably be about the same as with the last design. Dave Otte displays slides of the building's various entrances.

An attendee asks what happened to the public toilets that were part of the original design. Julie Livingston reviews how those fell out of the design per the City's decision to put a public loo in the right of way, but not within the building (perhaps on a corner close to the MAX line). Shelter staff will not have to manage it.

Dave Otte continues pointing out traits of the new design. A series of communal balconies on each floor replace the housing courtyard. The building's verticality along with the generous amounts of glass on the ground floor will help the building act as a beacon to get people inside. A gardening balcony on the west side is thought of as a good feature to view as people enter the gateway area.

Fern Elledge presents TPI's perspective on the change. The previous design was well liked. They are disappointed with the loss of a potential social enterprise that goes with the loss of retail space. There is also concern that the new design is more crowded than the original and that the ramps and stairs might be viewed as barriers to entry. Nonetheless, the design is growing on them; the building can still serve its functions; and it is clearly better than the current Glisan Street shelter.

An attendee asks why the block is divided into east and west "halves" instead of north and south ones. Dave Otte responds that the layout will guarantee southern light will get to the courtyards even if a tall building is constructed on the other half of the block. Also, using the west side of the block provided the greatest natural slope, which allows for the RAC and the Shelter to be on different floors while the entrances for both are close to street level. Lastly, it leaves the potential for what is built on the east side to accommodate retail space on its ground floor—a more desirable location for retail given that it is adjacent to the future MAX line.

An attendee asks where the parking will be. Dave Otte points out that there will be a level for parking below ground that will also house the building's mechanical equipment. There will be 18 parking spaces, down from the 26 planned for the original design when the all of the mechanical equipment was taken into account. There will still be a lot of bike parking throughout the building.

An attendee asks if the location of the shelter entrance will lead to congestion at the nearby crosswalk. Dave Otte notes that the sidewalk will be widened to twelve feet, and there will be curb extensions at the corners. The drop-off donation entry will be on the south side and will go to the shelter lobby so that shelter staff can supervise donations.

Co-Chair Cormack asks how a boundary will be created between the RAC and Shelter courtyards. The boundary will be defined by plantings, a storage area, and a kennel. In addition, it will be directly adjacent to RAC control desk for monitoring.

An attendee asks who will have control of the other half-block. Mike Andrews notes that PDC will give HAP an option on the site for 36 months. PDC will still own the site, but HAP can use it for construction staging. During the construction and after financial markets have stabilized, HAP will work on a development plan for the east half of the block, including a commitment to undertake another community process.

An attendee says that the building's large concrete walls will be targets for tagging. Dave Otte notes that the concrete will be painted and could be repainted in the event of a tagging. He is also looking into installing some green

features or public art to deter tagging. Simply replacing it with glass would not be ideal because it would look into the sleeping area of the shelter.

An attendee asks if there are not windows planned for the blank walls to the north and south. Dave Otte notes that this is just the first take on the design so there may be windows, and there are windows for the corridors that are not visible in the rendering. An attendee asks if solar panels have been considered for the south side of the building. Dave Otte notes that solar panels perform best when installed on the roof and they are planned for the roof of the RAC Development.

An attendee asks what is at risk if the financial situation worsens. Mike Andrews notes that the additional \$1.5 million from PDC is contingent on the River District Urban Renewal District making it through challenges. The equity funding for which HAP is planning is based on reliable assumptions for what the market can offer a good project from an agency with a good track record. HAP is awaiting cost estimates from the construction company. Those are expected to be within the current budget, which includes reasonable contingencies. So, the financial situation looks feasible now. If something does change, HAP would have to reconsider the design and program at that time.

An attendee asks how the RAC Development fits into the City's plan for one-for-one replacement of housing in the area. The City sees the development as a replacement for the Grove Hotel. The Grove had only 70 units, so the RAC Development's housing is still ahead of what would be needed for mere one-for-one replacement.

A few attendees voice concerns about the development not including market-rate housing and the remaining half block not being a desirable for any private developer. HAP was reminded of the OTCT desire for balance: a "no net loss and no net gain" of affordable housing. Mike Andrews notes that HAP will pursue plans for a development on that part of the block, but simply has not gotten to that point yet. Dave Otte notes that concerns over the development of the area might be gratified that the building is now using a more urban design. An attendee cautions that he feels the new design obligates HAP or the City to do something with the other half of the block. Another attendee says that it would be good to simply allow that half of the block some time so that the end result is well-developed for the sites best use. An attendee asks whether PDC might enter into a development agreement for Blanchet House for the other side of the block. Barbara Shaw, of PDC, notes that they already have a DDA with Blanchet House for redevelopment on Block 25.

Open discussion

Co-Chair Cormack asks attendees to voice their concerns in sequence around the table. Comments voiced include the following: Concern about obstacles to entry into the building. Sadness at the lost potential for a social enterprise. The project team is doing the best with what it has. From a client perspective, the new building is great. The new design economizes the project and resulting building. Belief that the east half of the block will be developed by someone because the neighborhood has turned around. The new design is smarter and more aesthetically pleasing. Excitement about what will be going on inside the

building remains. This is the best design so far (elegant, simple, efficient). Maybe move balconies to south side. Let retail happen when it happens. Concrete construction will be good. Perhaps the west garden area can be popped-out of the facade. Storage for bikes will act as a buffer between the street and the RAC courtyard. Add a big mural on the north side for view coming off of the Broadway Bridge. Disappointment at the abandoning of a full-block design due to concern over whether any for-profit project is developable on the east side. The new design is more ecologically conscious. Planned tenant organization wants to move in already.

Julie Livingston notes that the building will continue to evolve as design work continues, and the City's design review process is yet to be begun. It may bring up much of the same comments as were voiced at tonight's meeting.

Co-Chair Cormack notes that there should be no surprise that the CAC was asked to review the design again, given the financial times. She feels it is good that the team is still working to get the project built and that it seems the Committee wants to keep going with the design.

Update to housing program

Dianne Quast notes that the biggest change is the loss of 22 units. The other big change is that all of the units will be subsidized, instead of having 30 that would be without subsidy. This provides guaranteed additional income to the property, which means on-site services could continue even without support from the City. This change is part of the plan to let the service components drive how the property is managed—unlike most other HAP properties. Rachael Duke says HAP will work diligently with the City and partner organizations to determine the range of services to provide and how people can access them. HAP will also move forward with determining an equitable and transparent process that can be implemented to have partner organization be a part of the building's operations.

An attendee asks if it is still HAP's intention to work with the chronically homeless. It is, and the City has said that the resources will be available to do so. Nevertheless, getting subsidies for every unit will guarantee that some services could be provided even without City funding, though, probably for a less vulnerable population.

An attendee asks what screening criteria will be used. They have yet to be discussed and will depend greatly on what funds are available from the City. Discussion has not evolved to the point of knowing how people will be directed through the different programs of the project.

Next steps

Pamela Kambur notes that the River District Urban Renewal Advisory Committee will be given a presentation on the status of the RAC Development. A presentation will also probably be given to the Pearl District Neighborhood Association, members of which could not attend tonight's meeting because of a scheduling conflict. The development team is available if asked by other neighborhood associations.

The public art process will also be starting soon. It will probably include an ongoing “artist in residence” program for clients and residents along with a significant piece of public art. Pamela Kambur invites any CAC member specifically interested in art to contact her.

TPI has continued to talk with service providers about who and how various providers might work out of the RAC.

A Good Neighbor Agreement is still planned. The process for it will be started closer to the end of construction.

Alerts will be distributed to nearby residents and businesses whenever construction might disrupt the area.

The project team will be planning a ground-breaking party, and CAC members will be encouraged to attend.

The Co-Chairs thank attendees for their participation and adjourn at 7:15 p.m.