

Campus Plan Task Force Meeting Notes
May 25, 2010
Butler Board Room, Butler Pavilion -- 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Housing Numbers
3. Proposed Plan
4. Other

All materials from the meeting are posted on the Community Relations web page on the American University web site at www.american.edu/finance/fas/campus-plan.cfm

AU representatives attending the meeting included David Taylor, Chief of Staff for AU President Neil Kerwin; Jorge Abud, Assistant Vice President of Facilities Management; Jerry Gager, University Architect; and Penny Pagano, Director, Community and Local Government Relations.

The meeting was opened by David Taylor who shared with the task force that the meeting's agenda would focus on the university's number one priority which is improved undergraduate student housing.

The Power Point presentation was introduced by Jorge Abud who stressed that the proposed plans for higher-quality housing are linked to the university's strategic plan to improve the quality of the facilities at AU to support education and research.

The current design capacity for housing is 3,465. The fall 2010 design capacity is anticipated to be 3,533. The 2011 Campus Plan design capacity is proposed to be 4,940 – an increase of about 1,400 beds. An anticipated 1,113 beds will be for existing students by reducing freshman tripling (300), ending leases at the Berkshire Apartments (200), bringing students housed at Tenley to the main campus (497), and opening Clark and Roper for housing this fall (116). The remainder would be 150 beds for undergraduate growth over the next decade and accommodating demand for housing from students living off campus (144).

AU will need to build 2,000 new beds to meet this design capacity because some existing buildings with housing will be demolished.

The presentation reviewed sites on the campus that would be included in the proposed new plan.

In the new plan, the Beeghly building would have an addition that would double its size for science education and research. The center of the current Letts-Anderson residence hall complex would have a new Pavilion with a café and fitness equipment. A Bender Area addition would include offices and locker rooms. Spectator seating would be added to the field adjacent Bender. Three new residence halls would be added to the South Campus, and two new residence halls would be built at the Clark site. An addition is planned for Nebraska Hall.

An addition also is planned for the Kay Spiritual Life Center that would provide offices and meeting rooms. The old SIS building would be torn down and replaced with a slightly larger building with underground parking.

Sam Condit, Executive Vice president of the architecture firm of McKissack & McKissack that is working with AU, detailed plans for four new housing sites on the campus: Nebraska Hall, South Campus, the Clark site, and a new East Campus on the Nebraska parking lot.

An additional to Nebraska Hall, almost identical to the existing building, would be three stories with 120 beds.

The Clark site, proposed as residential housing with student support services on the first floor, would continue the lines of the new SIS building along Nebraska Avenue. The two buildings, with a maximum height of six stories, would provide over 600 new beds.

The new East Campus, currently the Nebraska parking lot, is proposed to include an academic building (at some future date) on Ward Circle, an alumni office, and four new residence halls, with first floor retail on Nebraska and New Mexico Avenues. There would be an 80 foot buffer between the dorms and the Westover town homes. Parking will be underground. The East Campus would include a smaller quad to match the existing one. More than 80% of the total 4,900 beds proposed in the new campus plan would be west of Nebraska Avenue.

Jorge Abud added that a driveway is proposed from the East Campus out to Massachusetts Avenue that would line up with the one used across the street at the Dept. of Homeland Security.

He also said that the university plans to pursue further processing second stage approval for the housing at Nebraska Hall, the four East Campus residence halls, the alumni/visitors center and the Letts Anderson pavilion. The university is in the process of hiring an architect for the East Campus for all four buildings, and we want to introduce them to people in the community who want to participate in this process.

One task force member suggested that the university think more about residential looking buildings that would provide a transition from the new East Campus into the neighborhood.

Another neighbor suggested that of L-shape design of one building on the Clark site be reversed to provide more green on the exterior of the building rather than on the interior.

Several neighbors raised concerns about traffic and pedestrians crossing Nebraska Avenue between the East Campus and the main campus. Others had questions about service vehicles serving the East Campus. Abud said AU would provide some type of Public Safety presence on the East Campus.

Another task force member asked whether retail would be allowed on the East Campus Abud responded that first floor retail that serves the university campus would be allowed, such as the campus book store and the UPS store that already are used by the community.

A question was also raised about when the overall Campus Plan would be shared including plans to move the Washington College of Law to the Tenley campus. Abud responded that we aren't there yet with final plans for the Tenley campus.

Another Wesley Heights resident said that AU's finding a tenant to replace Balducci's on New Mexico Avenue and coming back to the neighborhood with a good traffic and pedestrian safety plan for Nebraska Avenue like a pedestrian bridge would be very helpful to his neighbors. AU is still working to fill the Balducci's space, Abud said, but may need to shift from the concept of one large retailer to several smaller food venues, but is not considering fast food.

A Westover neighbor suggested that AU also consider the space behind McKinley building by Asbury as the location for another residence hall.

Some Westover neighbors said the proposed 80 foot buffer was not large enough for their community, and that student parking should be eliminated on the East Campus to stop student parties.

Abud also emphasized that most of the growth in the new campus plan is driven by the university's need to improve the quality of its facilities.

A task force member also asked the university to provide more materials in advance of the meeting so that the community could review them.

The next Campus Plan Task Force meeting will be Tuesday, June 22.

We are looking at July 20 or July 27 for the July meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.