

ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT HOME

SECTION 106 COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: October 19, 2005 9:00AM – 1:00PM

Location Offices of the National Capitol Planning Commission

Attendees: Joseph Woo (JW), Armed Forces Retirement Home-Washington (AFRH-W)

Hector Abreu Cintron (HA),
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)

Lisa Burcham (LB), D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

Tim Dennee (TD), SHPO

Nancy Witherell (NW), National Capitol Planning Commission (NCPC)

Jonathan McIntyre (JM), - (NCPC)

Sophia Lynn (SL), National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP)

Gary Scott (GS), National Park Service (NPS)

David Murphy (DM), NPS

Barbara Zartman (BZ), Committee of 100 on the Federal City (C100)

Sandra Hoffmann (SH),
Petworth and Columbia Heights Residents Concerned (PCHCC)

Rebecca Miller (RM), D.C. Preservation League (DCPL)

Timothy Jones (TJ), ANC-4C

Paul Brooks (PB), Catholic University of America (CUA)

Nancy Czapek (NC), General Services Administration (GSA)

Steve Schwartz (SS), GSA

Pamela Wessling (PW), RSM McGladrey (RSM)

John Thompson (JT), RSM

Giles Moore (GM), Koetter Kim & Associates (KKA)

Mona Khechen (MK), KKA

Emily Eig (EE), EHT Traceries, Inc. (EHT)

Carrie Albee (CA), EHT

The meeting began shortly after 9:00AM in the Moynihan Conference Room at the offices of NCPC. These meeting minutes do not attempt to provide a linear record of the meeting, but rather groups the comments of participants into topical areas.

OPENING REMARKS

NC provided opening remarks regarding the project, the process, and project status. The purpose of the meeting was to review draft guidelines for the Home pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The committee was informed that AFRH sent out a request for qualifications (RFQ) on October 12th for development of zones 3 and 4 (east side of the campus) and historic buildings located within those zones.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

NC stated that GSA is interested in the committee's comments on the guidelines for the entire site which were presented at the meeting, with particular focus on zones 3 & 4. The RFQ for zones 3 and 4 went out to the development community. During this working session, she explained, the group will review historic and urban design analyses that informed the proposed guidelines. With the site model that was prepared by KKA, participants can gain an understanding of the scale of the project and what is being proposed. The model includes several different options. With the committee's input, GSA will refine the guidelines and develop them in greater specificity to review with the committee at the next committee meeting in two weeks.

GM gave a Power point presentation of the following:

- Master Plan objectives,
- Design Framework,
- Existing Conditions, and
- Proposed Urban Design Framework.

He followed that with a presentation of the model and various options to use as a tool to explain the guidelines and what they might look like. The options are for illustrative purposes only. The guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive and define block by block what will be built. They are instead intended to capture key elements that should be observed when development occurs and they are generally more performance based than prescriptive.

EE presented information on the historic features, the eight historic Character Areas and historic views from the site.

The discussion that ensued encompassed the following key topics:

- The pastoral character of the site and the introduction of more urban elements,
- Historic elements and buildings,
- Open space,
- Views, view sheds and vistas,
- Density,
- Streets and bike paths,
- Plans for existing buildings,
- AFRH plans for a new facility, and
- NTHP plans.

HISTORIC FEATURES

Guidelines for addressing the historic character of the site were shown, including contributing buildings, views, open space and wooded areas, historic streets and allees of streets. Thus, historic character came up in discussion of most of the topic areas included within the minutes as well as the topics described in this section – the period of significance, the historic eligibility of the site as a whole, what Lincoln saw when he came to the site and incentives to developers to rehabilitate historic buildings.

LB – The period of significance was discussed at the last meeting. The end date reported in the AFRH Historic Structures report (1944) precedes the cold war and a number of large buildings on the campus. I would like to have a better understanding of how AFRH arrived at the end date for period of significance.

EE – In preparing our Historic Structures report for the property, we did not research the 1950's era buildings, so we don't have additional information to provide. The end date for the period of significance (1944) was the year in which the AFRH took a comprehensive survey of the existing physical plant in preparation for the 1947 and 1953 Master Plans that followed (and would, as we know, radically depart from the former approach to development at the Home). This year signals the beginning of the post-war Master Planning process and the end of the century of traditional development patterns at the Home.

GS – Harewood Road and Rock Creek Church Road are 19th c. intact historic roadways and are immensely significant.

EE – In 1988 the entire site was listed as eligible.

LB – Will AFRH provide incentives for rehab of existing buildings?

NC – AFRH and GSA are investigating options for the rehabilitation of existing buildings on the site. We are looking into historic tax credits and wish to explore other options that might be available. In that regard, if the SHPO knows of programs that

might be of benefit, we request that you forward information to us, so that we might point developers towards programs that will achieve the rehabilitation that we are seeking.

SL – There is a pronounced difference between new and historic buildings on the site. NPS would like AFRH to demolish the Scott Building so that the view shed from Lincoln’s cottage can be restored.

NC – The Scott Building is one of the main residential buildings for the Home and it is fully occupied.

GS – Is there a method that can be employed to achieve compatibility of new construction with the historic buildings?

LB – The AFRH team should identify features of the adjacent neighborhood, including scale massing and materials. The Design Guidelines should encourage responsiveness to context. Plus, AFRH should reintroduce historic entrances to the site.

EE – There are no historic elements on Irving Street.

GS – We are concerned that AFRH is taking a “Crystal City” approach to North Capitol Street. A wall of office buildings abutting the historic avenue is not the correct approach. Can the buildings in Zone 3 step back from North Capitol Street?

LB – What are the preservation plans for contributing buildings on the AFRH site over the next twenty years? She requested that this be addressed with specificity in the design guidelines.

NC – AFRH wants there to be adaptive re-use of historic buildings will solicit proposals for adaptive re-use of contributing buildings that are excess to its needs. Contributing buildings are indicated on the plan (in black). We seek to provide adaptive re-use for those contributing buildings that are surplus to the needs of AFRH.

SL - Rock Creek Church Road was the route Lincoln traveled and has historic value.

SH - Correction, Lincoln’s route to Old Soldier’s home was via 7th St.

OPEN SPACE

The presentation and model showed open space that will remain within the areas that will be reserved for AFRH, which include the golf course and central green spaces with zone 1, and portions of zone 2. In zones 3 and 4, a substantial portion of the meadow will remain and guidelines were prepared to address that space. New development in zones, 3, 4, 5 and 6 would also be required to protect some existing open space and/or create new ones. These areas will likely be outside of a new secured perimeter and publicly accessible for the most part, depending on the development proposals.

Discussion about open space generally revolved around the following:

- Neighbors' interests in preserving the open space, especially near their homes, and making it publicly accessible;
- Creation and/or retention of green space as a buffer between new development and adjacent streets;
- Continuity of open space within the development zones; and
- Views of open space from surrounding areas.

SH - Residents (of the surrounding neighborhood) appreciate the open green space. The only concern for open space expressed by AFRH is from within the site. We would like to see a balance of built environment and park space. Ideally, we would like the open space dedicated to neighborhood use. AFRH should at least provide a green buffer along the perimeter of the site.

GM-We will show a buffer on the guidelines.

NC-I would like to remind Sandra that open space on the site is not currently accessible. AFRH is looking for ways to make some areas of the site accessible to the public, while being mindful that AFRH's primary responsibility is for the residents and their security.

SL-Are you suggesting that AFRH will provide open space for the neighbors to walk in?

NC – Yes, we are looking at providing some areas of the site with accessibility to the neighbors.

HA - Will the central open space on the AFRH campus will be accessible to neighbors?

SH - No, the central open space (golf course) will be closed off from the neighborhood, and be visually obscured by development. How does this contribute to the quality of life

in the neighborhood? What's left? Is a narrow green space on the edge of the development for walking dogs and kids?

NC - A portion of the edge will remain undeveloped. 100 acres on the interior of the site will continue to be open space. With development, the secured perimeter will change and there are portions of the site that will become accessible, portions of which are open space.

SH – The proposed open space/buffer would be a more valuable asset to the neighborhood were it connected so that it could be utilized as a bicycle route for commuting.

DM – The NPS would like to see a balance of landscape features included in the preservation plan for the site.

TD – The forested area of Zone 2 is an important buffer.

SH - Federal elements of the comprehensive plan receive an imbalance of the open space. The city and federal governments should work towards alternates that may involve land swaps. The neighborhood association is exploring ways to meet AFRH's financial needs. It is important to maintain an historic sense of retreat; the Lincoln Cottage is a place of retreat. Financial needs of AFRH can be satisfied from various sources. This land is location specific.

JM - On the North Capitol St. route to downtown, the AFRH site provides relief for commuters -- green pause from the dense urban fabric. NCPC would like to see some of the buildings on the North Capitol St. edge present an inviting face to the street. How much green will be sacrificed? NCPC would like to see a balance between the built environment and the existing green buffer.

LB – The open space contained in Zone 3 and 4 is too isolated. You should work to achieve visual and pedestrian continuity with the other open spaces contained in these zones. New open space should be contiguous with pasture and act as a transition to the scale of existing buildings. The quadrangle shown on the model is inviting. I would like to see sample illustrations in the Design Guidelines.

VIEWS

The presentation showed existing and historic views and view sheds, and the height and open space guidelines were prepared to protect certain views. Comments on views generally concerned views into the site and views of open space and wooded areas.

DM - Long distance views were established by the McMillan Commission in 1902. AFRH is a wooded hill top. The NPS would like to see the site maintained as parkland contributing to the treed city image. Views of AFRH viewed from outside the site are important, not just the view from the adjoining neighborhood, but from the steps of the Capitol. Ninety foot high trees represent a 50-year investment. AFRH should be looking at the landscape with the 50-year investment in mind.

LB - External views into the site are important. The AFRH team needs to produce photographs or video to capture the important external view into the site. It would be helpful for the PA Committee to better understand. Development can be a buffer. Views from the Scott Statue, and intimate views from off the site should be maintained.

SL - From the Frederick Douglas house in Anacostia, the AFRH site is visible.

GM-We will be supplementing the Proposed Urban Design Framework by adding external views for other zones. (Zone 6 external views currently shown).

LB – Your model shows the upper range of the proposed density. We would like to see alternatives. The DC Office of Historic Preservation would like to stress that view sheds are important to preserve.

BZ – The proposed height of the buildings doesn't include the mechanical penthouse which will further intrude.

LB – The SHPO will review the Design Guidelines very closely regarding penthouse protrusions into the view sheds.

ROAD LAYOUT AND DENSITY

The presentation included 3 street typologies for major and minor roadways. Except for a connecting route between Irving Street and North Capitol Street, the exact layout of the streets was not specified in the guidelines. This generated discussion which principally related to the pastoral character of the site as compared to a more urban character that might be created, in part, if the street grid is rectilinear as compared to curvilinear. The discussion also addressed the density on the site as a whole and for zones 3 and 4, which

were generally viewed as the zones most capable of supporting density, and the zones for which the most detailed guidelines were presented at this meeting..

LB - Are the street patterns recommended because of existing patterns? Isn't zone 4 currently meadow & woods?

GM – Yes, Zone 4 is currently a meadow. We are not recommending a particular street pattern, but rather stating that the Irving Street entrance and bridge over North Capitol Street are to connect. Our guidelines call for a major road connecting these two entrances.

GS - Will the proposed road from Irving Street to the North Capitol Street bridge provide a short-cut through to the Catholic University (CUA) campus?

JW – The connection is only to the on/off ramps of North Capitol Street; the gate to CUA is open only at certain hours.

LB – Your plan should minimize streets on the site.

TD – What do you want the layout of streets to look like? Do you want an extension of the city grid or are you looking for curvilinear arrangement that responds to the landscape elements? You need to be more definitive about how you want the streets arranged.

GM – We would like to allow for flexibility in street location and arrangement. Other than the requirement that a major street (defined in the guidelines) connects the Irving Street entrance from the south with the North Capitol Street entrance on the east side of Zone 3, we would like to leave it up to the market to determine the best, most efficient arrangement of streets in this zone, using the 3 street typologies shown in the guidelines. We feel that we will achieve the best results with this approach.

DM – This is a romantic landscape. The planning team should think like Olmsted.

TD – The proposed plan is going to be different than a romantic landscape.

PW – The street pattern will depend on the uses in Zone 3 and 4. When we have completed the RFQ / RFP process, we will have a much better idea of whether this will be predominantly commercial or residential, and this will help to define what is needed for the layout of streets.

HA – The width of streets being proposed suggest a certain density in this zone.

GM – There are a variety of street widths proposed, depending on the function that they serve. The model shows a density of construction that is consistent with the design guidelines and the published density figures we provided you last month and in the DEIS. These are for illustrative purposes and not dictating a particular plan. We use the model to help analyze various alternatives.

DM – The plan should preserve Pershing Drive in Zone 4.

TD – I have a concern with the proposed density on the site. Where did the targeted FAR and total square footage numbers included in the previous presentation come from?

HA – How much money will be generated by the development plan?

PW – The proposed development plan is for the next twenty years. At what rate will the proposed density be absorbed? It is difficult to predict. Market projections of demand and financial returns are generally considered somewhat reliable for 5 year period. With a twenty-plus year absorption, it isn't possible to gain accurate projections of revenues. As well, the revenue will depend on the mix of uses that are eventually developed.

GS – Can a suburban office park density be a model for development on the ARFH site? How did you arrive at the proposed building heights?

GM - The proposed hierarchy of street widths helped to formulate the datum height (height at which buildings step back). It is the proportion of the street height to width that we are seeking to achieve on the primary streets.

JM - Will security requirements for setbacks to protect against blasts limit potential users?

GM – These properties do not anticipate federal tenants as primary occupants. We are not planning DoD mandated setbacks. This might have the affect of limiting some federal tenants from consideration.

TD – AFRH should prepare a rough street plan, set up rough parcel size and locations and calculate the value of the proposed development. Differing uses should be clustered within Zones 3/4.

GM – Request that committee review the proposed density shown at Zone 3.

LB – Regarding Zone 6, we prefer an extension of the adjacent street grid as an organizing element for the proposed residential development. Are the proposed entrances in the correct location?

DM – Has AFRH confirmed that the bridge over North Capitol Street (that is currently being renovated) adequate for the increased quantity of traffic?

JM - Was there a transportation management plan prepared for the site?

NC – Yes, it is covered in the DEIS and developers will be required to have a plan as part of the project mitigation.

AFRH FACILITIES

New facilities for AFRH are proposed in the plan for zones 1 and 2, and existing buildings in zones 1 and 2 retained. Most buildings in zone 3 and 4 are not used by AFRH, except LaGarde Building and Pipes Building (temporarily). The guidelines encourage developers to adaptively re-use buildings which are considered as contributing to the historic character of the site.

GS - What is being proposed for the existing maintenance facilities in zone 3?

JW - Maintenance buildings on the east side of the site are primarily vacant buildings and are slated for demolition, except for the one contributing building.

SL-The Smithsonian greenhouses are still in use.

TJ - The Smithsonian greenhouses could be utilized to produce hydroponic vegetables for AFRH.

JW-We are looking for alternate locations to relocate the Smithsonian greenhouses on the site in Zone 1.

LB-What facilities in zone 3 and 4 are currently being used by AFRH?

NC-Pipes Building was brought back into service temporarily to house Gulfport residents, and the LaGuarde Building is occupied. AFRH would like to relocate the nursing home and dementia functions housed in the LaGarde Building to the northern part of the campus to better integrate those residents with AFRH operations, but this idea will require more study. Some of the smaller buildings are being used by AFRH as residences for staff.

JW-AFRH wants to relocate all residents to the northern end of the campus for greater efficiency in operations.

HA – What are the new buildings shown on the model, how are they funded?

GM – Some of the new buildings in zone 1 are for illustrative purposes. For example, small buildings could flank green space in front of the Grant Building and create a quadrangle.

NC – Other buildings would be for AFRH purposes, such as a replacement for LaGarde Building, and for parking. AFRH does not currently have funding for, nor has it fully studied that option.

NW - Will the golf course remain unchanged?

NC - A couple of the holes on the southern edge of the site (zone 4) might be relocated closer to the Scott Building.

SL - Is the golf course the 100 acres you referred to?

NC - The 100 acres includes the golf course and core of AFRH campus.

INTENT OF THE GUIDELINES

JM – Will new buildings be compatible with existing? Do you intend a stylistic contrast with buildings on campus? NCPC is concerned that the scale of the development blocks will influence the setting. The development plans should reflect the arrangement on campus. What is shown on the model does not appear to be residential; it feels more commercial or institutional. How do you plan on achieving your goal? Your approach does not utilize zoning; you are not proposing a street layout, nor specifying size of floor plates or overall massing?

GM – The Design Guidelines allow for multiple scenarios; they are guidelines and don't prescribe a single outcome. We plan on reviewing developers proposals for conformance to the broad directions contained in the guidelines. Different zones have differing goals. In some areas, we require a percentage of open space. Major roads are a certain width and have specific building heights which face the major roads. While allowing flexibility in how the market pursues street patterns and block arrangements, the guidelines control where the tallest buildings will be placed, in relation to the required open space, and other specific components of the development.

INFRASTRUCTURE

TD – Someone has to incur the cost of constructing the streets and associated utility work.

BZ – Has AFRH done an infrastructure survey?

NC – As part of the EIS process, AFRH has surveyed the existing infrastructure that is available to service the site and reported on the findings.

NTHP OPERATIONS ON THE SITE

SL – AFRH needs to re-assess the Eagle Gate. Is it sufficient for the 20,000 visitors who are expected to visit the site annually?

NC/PW - The DEIS addresses traffic. DC Department of Transportation discouraged AFRH from opening any additional northern gates. NTHP is required to prepare environmental analyses for its activities on the site that will supplement the work being conducted by AFRH.

SL – Your model shows a proposed building in the parking lot for the National Monument. NTHP would like to have the parking lot adjacent to the Grant Building for its operations on the site.

NC – The Grant Building parking lot is essential to the building's commercial viability and is not available for National Trust operations.

LB – The parking requirements for the National Monument must be addressed.

NC – We are discouraging parking buses on the site. AFRH has communicated to the NTHP its responsibilities in regards to operating on this site. They are required to prepare an amendment to the Environmental Impact Statement which addresses estimates of numbers of visitors, transportation and parking. To date, we have not received the requested material.

REGULATORY

There was discussion of the regulatory process. GSA and NCPC maintain that development on Federally-owned property does not require zoning but is reviewed through the NCPC master planning process.

TD – With a long term lease arrangement on federal property, does this preclude adherence to DC zoning requirements?

NC – The project is not required to be permitted through DCRA.

TD – A developer can not build on federal land without DC Zoning approval.

BZ – This issue came up with the NPS and trailer being utilized for Charter School classrooms.

TD – GSA should get its legal department to draft a memorandum.

NC – GSA attorneys are currently engaged in that effort.

PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENT

NC reiterated the need for the signators to provide comments on the Programmatic Agreement that was circulated to them last year. The next draft will then be shared with all committee members. LB agreed to provide initial comments on the Programmatic Agreement but expressed that it was premature for Master Plan comments. HA-This is the first round of comments. Comments in future drafts should be shared with all review parties and GSA agreed to that.

ARCHEOLOGICAL STUDIES

LB asked if an analysis of archeological resources included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) PW responded that the findings on archeological resources are in the DEIS. A draft report on these resources was submitted to the SHPO and revisions made based on the SHPO's comments prior to inclusion of the information in the DEIS.

GULFPORT HOME

A question was asked about the status of the Gulfport site and whether or not it would be abandoned. JW explained that some of the wooden structures on site were damaged beyond repair and will be demolished. However, there are no current plans to demolish the residential tower at Gulfport. AFRH has requested funds from Congress to renovate the residential tower at Gulfport .

FINANCIAL ALTERNATIVES TO DEVELOPMENT AT AFRH-W

A question was asked about other options being pursued by AFRH to increase its revenues, with the comment from SL that this current funding arrangement is over 150 years old and should be reviewed and updated. The NTHP would like to see a comprehensive review of all available options to obtain funding. NTHP will assist AFRH in gaining public support for other options.

NC – The AFRH is proceeding with very specific direction from Congress. AFRH was authorized Congress to leverage its real estate asset to increase revenues in the Trust Fund in order to provide a funding stream for the Home's operations and capital improvements. AFRH is limited in how it can invest its funds but is interested in legislation that could change that. AFRH has also revamped its operations to reduce operating costs.

BZ – The federal government could pursue land swaps elsewhere and attribute the revenues to AFRH.

NC – There is no available Federal land in the District of Columbia, other than land owned by NPS. GSA has no excess land in DC.

LB – How much revenue does AFRH need to generate with the project?

NC – Funding requirements change from year to year. It isn't possible to put an exact figure forward, because AFRH can not anticipate natural disasters and other unforeseen events. Real estate projections beyond five years are notoriously inaccurate. The Master Plan covers a twenty year period. We seek flexibility in the plan.

NEXT STEPS

GM – We plan on providing more specificity on the priorities and on the historic elements in each of the six development zones on the site.

LD – The views into the site are important, but we don't have the visual tools to evaluate their priority and level of importance. A video or additional photographs of external views into the site are important.

NC – We will include additional images with our next presentation. If possible, we will prepare a video, if not; more still images will be taken. We are working towards a submission to NCPC.

NC – We would like to circulate a draft Design Guidelines and solicit comments from the participants prior to submitting to NCPC.