

Richardson Olmsted Complex Master Plan - FINAL

Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting

May 31, 2011

6:00 PM

Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society

CAG

✓ Justin P. Azzarella
Jennifer Bayles
✓ Melissa Brown
✓ Travis Carlson
✓ Benjamin Christy
Brian Dold
Harvey Garrett
Louis Grachos

Chris Hawley
Thomas Herrera-Mishler
Anne Harding Joyce
MaryAnn Kedron
✓ Jason Kulaszewski
✓ Francis R. Kowsky
Michael McLean
Carolyn Morris

✓ Paul Murphy
✓ Gregory M. Patterson
Tanski
✓ Ted Pietrzak
Barbara Seals Nevergold
Jen Silverman
✓ Tim Tielman
✓ Max Willig

RCC

✓ Eva Hassett
✓ Monica Pellegrino Faix
✓ Kelly Hayes McAlonie

Consultants

✓ Chris Mendel

Agenda

Agenda

I. Welcome and Overview.

Max Willig and Gregory Patterson-Tanski, Co- Chairs of the Community Advisory Group.

- a) Welcome and brief overview of CAG
- b) Review of previous meeting
- c) Introduction of new members

II. Welcome

Eva Hassett and Kelly Hayes McAlonie, RCC board members

III. South Lawn Design

Chris Mendel, Andropogon Associates

IV. Parking Lot

Monica Pellegrino Faix, Richardson Center Corporation

V. Major activities update

Monica Pellegrino Faix, Richardson Center Corporation

- a) Stabilization
- b) Showcase space
- c) National Preservation Conference
- d) Public access
- e) Core Project Development Planning
- f) Buffalo Architecture Center
- g) Schedule

VI. Site visit?

Summary

Agenda Item: Welcome and Overview

Discussion and Conclusions:

- Welcome.

Gregory Patterson Tanski and Max Willig welcomed the group and introduced new members.

- Travis Carlson – Buffalo State College Student
- Jason Kulaszewski – Buffalo State College Student
- Jen Silverman – neighborhood representative

- Max and Gregory reviewed the December, 2011 CAG and January, 2011 Public Meetings.
 - An 8 acre South Lawn landscape between Forest Avenue and the Towers Building will be constructed.
 - The parking lots consisting of 112 spaces will be removed and replacement parking lots will be constructed for Buffalo Psychiatric Center east and north of the Strozzi Building.
 - These activities are part of the first steps of the Master Plan Core Project.
 - Preparations to solicit a developer for the hotel, event & conference space, and develop the Buffalo Architecture Center and Visitor Center are underway.

Action items

Person responsible

Deadline

Agenda Item: Welcome and consultant introduction

Discussion and Conclusions:

Eva Hassett also welcomed the group. She said that the Richardson Center Corporation (RCC) responded to the public comments regarding improvements to the South Lawn and Parking Lot designs. There were some comments not addressed about issues for future phases of the project and changes to adjacent properties, for example modifications to the Buffalo Psychiatric Center property and Forest Avenue. A list of public comments and RCC responses was distributed.

The final approvals for the GEIS and General Project Plan were granted by Empire State Development on May 23rd, enabling the South Lawn and Parking Lot to move forward. Delays in these approvals pushed back the construction schedule and the Parking Lots will be constructed in 2011, provided the funds are drawn down from the Division of Budget, and the South Lawn in 2012.

Action items

Person responsible

Deadline

Agenda Item: South Lawn

Discussion and Conclusions:

Chris Mendel from Andropogon Associates provided an update on the South Lawn and responses to the major public comments:

- Improve upon the Olmstedian influence by using more original design elements
- Expand the South Lawn landscape
- Increase greenspace in new BPC parking lots
- Use sustainable and green technology
- Attend to the pedestrian and bicyclist experience
- Use traffic calming methods on the South Lawn circulation loop

- Reduce the western buffer to improve views
- Conduct an archeological study
- Open gates for pedestrian access

Existing Conditions – The current circulation entry configuration was greatly altered from the original Olmsted design, particularly to the east. The area has been dominated by two large surface parking lots. There are existing trees that remain.

Addition of BPC triangle – This triangular area of BPC property has been added to the South Lawn. BPC also agreed to allow the curved entry roadway to occur on their property, creating a graceful and Olmstedian entry. The additional landscape increases the South Lawn from 7 acres to 9.72 acres and creates a cohesive experience.

Rain Garden and Bridge – There were several public comments to use permeable paving and increase sustainable elements. Given the clay soil and poor drainage permeable paving it is not possible. However, the rain gardens to the west were increased in size. The rain gardens will filter and clean water before it enters into the stormwater system. A decorative pedestrian bridge has been added along the western pathway between 2 of the 4 rain gardens.

Parking – Twelve spaces were added along the west of the circulation drive. Additional parking for the site will be addressed in future phases.

Vegetation & Landscape – 125 new trees will be added. An arboretum experience will be created with a mix of conifer trees, deciduous canopy trees, and ornamental understory trees. The planting plan for the BPC triangle is slightly different for the triangle in order to differentiate it from the rest of the South Lawn.

The tree buffer to the west was reduced in response to public input to leave the connection open to the west for improved views and future open space development.

Vehicular circulation – The curved vehicular entry pays homage to the original sweeping approach into the property that could not be recreated.

Traffic calming measures were addressed. The Richmond entry road is 24' and it reduces to 22' including a 2' granite cobble gutter on one side. The pedestrian crossings are also granite cobble, doubling as a rumble strip. A "speed table" at the plaza drop off increases the road elevation by 6". All of these elements work together to reduce vehicular speed.

The pedestrian pathway was improved to echo the Olmstedian aesthetic. The .7 mile pathway is more curvilinear, includes triangular intersections, and emulates the original looped drop off with a double pathway at the north.

Two pedestrian gates will be added with Medina sandstone pillars and opened at the Abbotsford and Richmond entries. A concrete pad for bike parking has been added to the west of the plaza. The fence will be refurbished between Abbotsford and Richmond. Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy was very involved in the pedestrian pathway changes.

Comments on the South Lawn

Q - How can we be sure that the bridge will look "Vauxian" and decorative and that the concrete reinforcement will not be visible? A – A Richardson veneer pattern in Medina Sandstone will be used to clad everything on the bridge and concrete reinforcement will not be visible from the trails.

Q – Will the Towers be reflected in the rain garden? A – There will not be standing water due the nature of rain gardens and regulations that prohibit standing water for more than 72 hours following a storm;; it will be lush greenery. Andropogon designed rain gardens for the Harriman Quad on the UB South Campus that are good examples of how they will look on the Richardson site.

Q- Has the Buffalo Psychiatric Center been involved in the design of the triangle? A – Yes there were several design review meetings and they approve.

Q – How is signage handled for the speed table? A – It is readable to drivers without signage.

Q – Who reviews and approves the traffic signage, good job keeping it to a minimum. A – The traffic signs were agreed to by RCC/BPC/OMH.

Q – Could the pathway be .625 mi, 1 k, instead of .7 mi?

Q – What is the walkway material? A – It is an asphalt aggregate pathway intended to appear gravelly.

Q – Will the pedestrian gates be opened? A – Yes

Q – Forest Avenue speed is very fast and the trees are not in good condition, will this be part of the project? A – The property line and construction limit line is the fence. The City of Buffalo has proposed a multi use path along Forest Avenue as well as stormwater improvements.

Comment – Good work! I like it!

Q – What color is the granite? A – Dark grey with reds.

Action items**Person responsible****Deadline****Agenda Item: Parking Lot relocation****Discussion and Conclusions:**

Monica Pellegrino Faix presented an update on the Parking Lot relocation for the Buffalo Psychiatric Center lots.

Greenspace and sustainability - The new parking lot rendering reflects the greenspace - plantings are on the perimeter and in the center of the lots. The green improves the walking experience.

Replacement lots are designed with a greatly improved storm water drainage system.

Comments on the Parking Lot relocation.

Q – Why does the BPC need so much parking? The Elmwood Lot is almost always empty. A – The BPC was firm on the need for a nearly 1:1 replacement of their parking.

Q – Can the BPC employees and visitors park temporarily on Forest Avenue and in the Elmwood lot to allow for the South Lawn construction to start before the replacement lots are constructed? A – The BPC is firm that the new lots must be constructed first, there may be some flexibility proceeding with the South Lawn with a minimal number of spaces incomplete.

Comment – There should be an improvement to the pedestrian experience along the east – west axis above the Strozzi Building. The good views from this area should be preserved and available to all. A – This may be possible with additional plantings. This is BPC property and Conversations will need to take place about inviting more pedestrian traffic.

Action items

Talk to BPC and Wendel Duchscherer about the east west pedestrian pathway (north of Strozzi).

Person responsible

Monica Faix

Deadline**Agenda Item: Showcase space, public access and National Preservation Conference****Discussion and Conclusions:**

Monica Pellegrino Faix presented a few quick updates

Showcase Space - Half of the first floor of the Towers Building 45, about 5,000 square feet, is being rehabbed to an as new condition for events and to show the building potential to developers.

National Preservation Conference – The Richardson Olmsted Complex will be part of many activities during the conference in October. There will be at least three events in the Towers Building, a field session with Central Terminal running three times, a field session by bike with Olmsted Parks and Forest Lawn, the start of a Tour Program, and development of a video and exhibits to “tell the story” of the site and reuse plans

Comments**Action items**

Arrange CAG visit to the site the end of June.

Person responsible

Monica Faix

Deadline**Adjournment**