

## **Fort Lawton Community Workshop Meeting Summary June 21, 2008**

Today's meeting was the fourth in a series of six planning workshops focused on the development of a Reuse Plan for Fort Lawton. A parallel series of discussions known as the *Community Relations Plan* focused specifically on how the housing providers and neighbors can work together to ensure the success of homeless housing as part of the overall reuse plan.

[www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/fortlawton/brac/public\\_outreach.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/fortlawton/brac/public_outreach.htm)

Today's meeting was divided into four sections.

1. BRAC Process and NOI (Notice of Interest) Overview
2. Process Update and review of Guiding Principles
3. Presentation of Site Alternatives
4. Presentation Wrap-up and Discussion of Next Steps

Summaries of the four forum discussions are included below. All materials and handouts from the meeting are available for download on the website.

[www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/fortlawton/brac/public\\_outreach.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/fortlawton/brac/public_outreach.htm)

### **8:30- 9:00 BRAC Process and NOI Review**

#### **BRAC Overview**

Only a few members of the public were in attendance at 8:30 and, after a brief discussion, it determined that a presentation on the BRAC Process and NOI Review was not necessary.

### **9:00 Introduction and Agenda Review**

Brian Scott made brief introductions and discussed printed materials that were being provided to meeting attendees. Among these were printed comment forms, which Brian requested that attendees complete and turn in at the completion of the meeting or send to him later.

### **9:10 Process Update / Feedback / Guiding Principles**

Brian Scott discussed the agenda for the current meeting and the project time line. It was emphasized that the plan development process is intended to define intentions for use of the Fort Lawton property and that the plan is an evolving document.

A brief overview of the project and project site was presented, including a review of site options presented at the previous meeting and the development of guiding principles.

Questions from the audience prompted discussion of how goals and public preferences expressed at previous public meetings were integrated into the current Master Plan Guiding Principles and draft development plans. It was noted that public preferences were balanced with goals set by the City.

### **9:30 Affordable Housing Program**

Adrienne Quinn from the Seattle Office of Housing led a discussion about affordable housing. She began with a discussion of the City's goals regarding homeless and affordable housing as was the requirement for BRAC plans to address a community's homeless housing needs. The need to provide affordable and homeless housing is to be balanced by the City's need to meet Army's income generation goals and to provide housing for all income levels as part of the project.

The process for analyzing affordable housing opportunities in Magnolia was discussed. The City's siting policy within its' HUD approved Consolidated Plan limits the number of subsidized housing units serving extremely low income households in any census block group to no more than 20% of the total units within the census block group. The outcome of the reuse plan will comply with this HUD approved policy. It was noted that the City is proposing less affordable housing than was proposed in the applications received.

A great deal of discussion with the audience focused on the appropriate scale and analysis of housing affordability.

## **9:50 Housing Market Analysis**

The affordable housing program was reviewed as an introduction to the subject of the overall housing program. This included discussion of the affordable housing types to be included as part of the development (Habitat for Humanity owner-occupied homes and housing for the formerly homeless, including housing for families and seniors). Architectural options for these different housing types were then presented, including options for redeveloping existing buildings as senior housing and the use of duplexes for family housing.

The options for market rate housing, presented at previous meetings, were also discussed, including single family dwellings on large, medium and small lots; large and small townhomes and flats. The opportunity for redevelopment of Leisy Hall as townhomes was also discussed. Discussion with the audience included the issues of who would be contracted for construction of housing; how parking would be configured; and the quality of affordable housing construction.

Sterling Hamilton, an economist from Gardner Johnson consultants presented information on the housing market in Seattle and Magnolia. This information was used to determine what range of housing options would be considered for inclusion in the proposed redevelopment. The presentation made the following general points regarding the housing market:

- Most housing (67 percent) in Magnolia is single-family and very little multifamily development has been undertaken since 1990.
- A relatively small proportion of residences in Magnolia are under 2000 square feet in area, limiting opportunities for some households. Smaller units tend to have a higher median price per square foot.
- Recent national real estate trends have not impacted the Magnolia real estate market significantly.

Recommendations based on research findings were presented. For the three options:

- Option 1 would consist of approximately 1/3 small-lot single family homes, 1/3 larger single family homes and 1/3 townhomes. An existing structure would be redeveloped as townhomes. The level of financial risk for this type of development would be low to moderate.
- Option 2 would consist of approximately 40 percent larger single family homes and fewer small-lot single family homes and townhomes. The level of financial risk for this type of development would be low.
- Option 3 would include approximately 40 percent small-lot single family homes and a greater amount of townhomes, including a large percentage of luxury townhomes; relatively few larger

single family homes would be constructed. The level of financial risk for this type of development would be moderate to above moderate.

Sterling noted that when analyzing development alternatives, it is necessary to think like a developer. He explained that developers have same concern as neighborhood residents, in that they want to create development that will be valued by the market and not decrease local property values.

## **10:10 Overall Housing Program**

Brian Sullivan discussed the use of a capacity study to identify the upper number of residences that can be constructed on site. He noted that the number of affordable units does not vary between the three site alternatives presented. He also noted that the analysis was intended to elicit comments from attendees that can be used to further refine the options. The analysis was used to develop site plan options which allow the project team to see what will fit on the site.

## **10:30 Transportation Implications**

Tom Brennan presented information on transportation and traffic. The information he presented included the following points:

- Very little information is available from the City regarding actual traffic counts in the vicinity of the project. The transportation consultants made traffic estimates themselves.
- The intersection at 36th Avenue West and West Government Way experiences very low levels of traffic compared to other intersections in the area and has more than enough capacity to accommodate additional traffic generated by the proposed development.
- Traffic generated by the project would constitute only a small percentage of the total traffic on local arterials such as 15th Avenue West.
- For the present study, analysis at a traffic engineering level of detail will not be provided; more detailed analysis will be done in future phases of site development planning.

Discussion with the audience included use of Commodore Way as a means of accessing the site and the amount of traffic which would be generated by Veterans Administration activities.

## **10:50 Break**

The audience agreed to forgo a break in order to have more time for discussion

## **11:00 Presentation of Site Alternatives**

A matrix was presented, describing the three options and their differences in terms of the following factors:

- Senior housing location
- Family housing location/strategy
- Harvey Hall reuse
- Leisy Hall reuse
- Total affordable units provided
- South access route
- Street grid strategy
- North end access route
- Parks strategy
- Greenway strategy
- Storm water handling strategy

- Use of VA Property

### **11:30 Discussion of Issue Options**

Brian Scott reviewed constants which were used to develop the site options. These include:

- Existing zoning of the site (Single Family 7,200) and possible use of a Planned Residential Development (PRD)
- Available land for development, which was illustrated with a map showing areas of the site which can be developed and those which cannot.
- Goals for the project, including protecting forested areas; creating a sustainable design; facilitating pedestrian connections and safe streets; maintaining residential character; and maintaining the single family residential character of 36th Avenue West.

This introductory discussion culminated with a re-presentation of the Master Plan Guiding Principles. It was again noted that this site alternative matrix describes key issues addressed in the design options but that no options are perfect; the intent is to look at features presented and provide feed back on how they would work.

### **12:30 Discussion of Site Options**

Brian Scott presented the three site alternatives, describing each in terms of the previously discussed site alternative issues using a series of site plan graphics. Discussion of each option concluded with presentation of a summary matrix describing the options key elements, strengths and weaknesses.

Brian Sullivan then summarized the option findings by presenting site alternative matrices which describe key issues addressed in design options in terms of four issue categories:

- Community: It was noted that all of the alternatives would have a positive outcome in terms of community issues such as property values, impacts on infrastructure, safety and community character.
- Housing: The North-South Option (Option 2) would provide the best outcome in respect to flexibility of housing, but would not necessarily blend in with the community as well as other options. Other options also had positive aspects. All options would incorporate "Built Green" construction.
- Circulation: The Hybrid Option (Option 3) would provide the best outcome in respect to circulation.
- Open Space/Environment: The Hybrid Option (Option 3) would provide a much better outcome in respect to open space and the environment than the other options.

It was noted that no options are perfect and that they should not be considered as final "all-or-nothing" proposals. Instead, attendees should look at the features incorporated into each of the plans and provide feedback on how they work.

There was involved discussion with attendees regarding the hazards and benefits of stormwater ponds that were proposed in the options; the location and character of proposed parks and open spaces; and reuse of existing buildings. The ability of future development to deviate from the final BRAC plan was also discussed.

### **12:50 Wrap-up / Next Steps**

Brian Scott noted again that the audience should complete the comment form provided with the handouts and turn it in at the conclusion of the meeting or otherwise send it to the project team.

## **Questions and Comments and Community Visions (from all stages of the meeting)**

### **Public Input**

#### **Questions**

Q: The list does not present actual goals. Is a list of actual goals available?

A: The goal list developed for and presented at this meeting balances goals presented by the public with goals presented by the City and others. Also, some editing has been undertaken in order to summarize goals. Therefore, it can't completely match goals presented by attendees at other meetings.

Q: Public goals are to be used as test; but the list of goals presented here has been shifted/changed from what attendees discussed at previous meetings. Environmental improvement is a goal and a desired percentage of open space was stated at a previous meeting.

A: Public voting at previous meetings was intended to provide general feedback, not hard numbers such as particular percentages of open space. If attendees feel that there are specific issues/omissions from the goal list, these should be communicated to Brian Sullivan.

Q: "Protect vegetation across the site" and "protect heron habitat" were specific goals and language is not included/changed

A: Please refer to the previous question and answer. Attendees should review the plan to see how their concerns are addressed.

### **Affordable Housing**

#### **Questions**

Q: The City is using 20 percent as the percentage of affordable housing that a neighborhood can optimally accept while HUD guidelines state 10 percent. Does this greater percentage create problems?

A: The HUD 10% figure refers to a census tract, not a census block group. Census tract is a larger area. If we were to apply the 10% to the census tract, it would allow 291 units at Fort Lawton, not the approximately 85 proposed by the City.

Q: Are there any specific studies regarding limited services in the project vicinity, limited transportation services, etc. that show that this location can be successful?

A: Residents in the Laurelhurst neighborhood had the same arguments, but affordable housing at Sandpoint has been very successful. Analogous situations have been reviewed. Working on additional transportation provision; support services at Daybreak Star. [Many audience members disagreed, stating that no formal analysis has been done.]

Comment: Many local residents hope to live in neighborhood for a long time – more than 20 years.

A: The City's agreements regarding affordable housing are for fifty years; the City is committed to the success of housing at Fort Lawton.

Q: What are criteria for the success of the housing component of the project?

A: Criteria are the success of families and success in how the development works with the neighborhood. In Laurelhurst, there is lots of volunteering in the neighborhood. At recent meetings, the neighborhood provided positive feedback.

Comment: If immediate neighborhood population is considered, the percentage of affordable housing would be closer to 25 percent.

A: Yes, if the study area is small, the percent naturally goes up. However, City goals are not only for the immediate neighborhood, but have to address the larger community as a whole.

Comment: The neighborhood is being portrayed as uniformly wealthy. Many people currently living in the area have lower incomes.

Comment: During visits at Highpoint, units that were low income and that were market-rate could be distinguished from one another based on construction quality and other factors.

A: SHA has led a very large number of tours of High Point and people cannot generally tell which is which. Less expensive construction isn't always low income housing.

Q: Can clarification be provided regarding the total number of proposed housing units?

A: The City will not build out to the maximum allowable number of housing units, but instead wants to keep the total number of homeless units below 100; this doesn't include housing provided through Habitat for Humanity.

Q: Has homeless housing been addressed by being included in the goal matrix?

A: This point is noted.

## **Housing Market Analysis**

### **Questions**

Q: What is the median home price for Capitol Hill / Magnolia comparisons?

A: Will supply this information in future analysis.

Q: Will views create demand for more high density development?

A: Neighborhoods adjacent to Lake Washington and other high density areas still have better access, which high density development requires, than the project site. High density development in older neighborhoods (Madison Park) does exist, but because it tended to slip through zoning.

Q: The previous slide discussed risk. Is this useful for the neighborhood to know?

A: Neighbors need to think like a developer when considering what could be built on the project site. That is, what is the housing market's demand?

Q: Do options take into account homeless housing when calculating risk?

A: No examples of developments that incorporate homeless housing exist in Seattle. Concern is understandable. However, risk can be mitigated through SHA/HUD programs.

Q: Are people willing to buy houses near homeless?

A: Highpoint has low income housing but not homeless housing. The answer to this question depends on factors such as the design of the development and percentage of assisted housing.

Q: Will commercial development along 15<sup>th</sup> affect housing demand? Will national economy affect housing? How do local factors compare with national factors?

A: Property values are based on residential density in area – this is typical in Seattle and other places. Magnolia will not be as affected by national trends due to local income and lack of foreclosure.

## **Housing Program**

### **Questions**

Q: Where will parking for homeless be located?

A: Two types of parking location will be provided for formerly-homeless units. No garages will be constructed, but parking will be provided adjacent to alleys or as on-street parking; a parking lot will be provided as part of the larger building. More than adequate parking has been provided at other projects. Market rate housing would have rear parking or garages.

Q: Who will be receiving construction contracts? Are these awarded to "government's favorite contractors"?

A: The planning and development process is long-range and contracts will be created after 2011 through a standard bid process; no contracts have been awarded.

Q: Can you clarify that the recommendations will not require a rezone?

A: It is currently assumed that the proposal can be done under the PRD ordinance.

Comment: The VA building will be an office building. A location in Interbay may be better for homeless housing.

Q: Why wasn't more upper end housing considered given the character of the neighborhood?

A: the housing options are optimized for income generation. Diversity in housing types works better with homeless housing than including a greater percentage of high-end housing.

Q: How were lot sizes set in analysis?

A: Lot sizes were calculated based on statistical analysis. The number proposed is close to the SF5000 zoning limit.

Q: Was impact on risk of non-market rate housing considered? Will this risk analysis be done? It would seem to have an effect.

A: This will be addressed in next round of balancing.

Q: Aren't there other comparisons at Laurelhurst and other areas? How has senior housing in Magnolia worked?

A: Sample sizes would be too small for useful analysis, because they would be based on a small numbers of similar developments.

Comment: Would like the King County tax assessor to make a presentation at an upcoming meeting. This request was previously made.

Q: How will the current real estate market affect risk?

A: The proposed development time-frame is long – market conditions may be different when the project is completed. In the future, the Seattle real estate market will have more emphasis on in-city housing.

Comment: Maintenance and other issues are different for a single house than for a group of 20 houses.

A: Maintenance Issues can be addressed efficiently as a group; proper management of development addresses this issue.

Q: The public was told in previous meetings that existing property values will not be affected by this project. Now it is being said that that home values will be lower than what my home is currently worth. What is the highest sale price for a proposed house?

A: Prices identified here for proposed houses are averages. The proposal is for a range of housing types and will accommodate some luxury/view homes; all of the proposed houses won't be high end.

Q: Neighborhood property values will be affected by homeless housing. Who is covering cost of public services, etc.?

A: This information is being discussed in homeless housing meetings and in documents that have been prepared.

Q: I would like to see the housing assumptions.

A: These can be provided on the website.

### **10:30 Transportation Implications**

#### **Questions**

Q: How much traffic was rerouted when Magnolia bridge was closed?

A: We don't currently have this information.

Q: No mention of has been made of traffic on Commodore Way. People will go that way to enter and leave the neighborhood. What impact will there be?

A: No detailed analysis has been done yet, but based on the proposed plan, it is assumed that most traffic will head to the south not the north. Spot traffic counts could be done for Commodore Way or data

for portions further east on Commodore can be collected from the City. There aren't currently City traffic counts for western portions of Commodore Way.

Q: What would be the increase in bus use?

A: The density of the proposed development would not likely require additional bus service under County standards, but it could possibly be negotiated.

Comment: Travel from this neighborhood tends to be into Ballard. South Lake Union will also generate new jobs.

A: Detailed modeling has not yet been done, but assumes work trips into downtown. Estimates are for about one new vehicle at Nickerson per minute.

Q: The data presented doesn't appear to be accurate – getting onto 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue West currently takes forever.

A: This project would have relatively minimal impact on current conditions. This is only an analysis of additional traffic, not an analysis of the quality of existing traffic flow.

Q: How would gas price increases affect traffic numbers? Has this been factored in?

A: Numbers do not address this.

Q: Clarification on VA employees and visitors is requested. The FLARC could hold 1000 people, but only has about 300 now. What are future plans?

A: The VA building would house administrative and clinical functions, with about 100-150 employees and around 200 daily customers.

Q: Is more analysis coming? Projections need to include the road into the park as shortcut.

A: The next set of traffic numbers will address questions that have been raised. This study is not going to provide a traffic engineering level of detail. More detailed analysis will be done in future phases of site development planning.

## **Site Alternatives**

### **Questions**

Q: Is the proposal only to rezone the property in question? can you clarify the density bonus?

A: Yes – if rezoning is done it would only be for the project site.

Q: How does a project qualify for a density bonus?

A: Additional density is allowed in exchange for providing community benefits including affordable housing and public open space. A review process would determine what the City defines as acceptable. This process is outlined in the PRD section of the Land Use Code.

Q: The City is interested in including all three of the forested areas in Discovery Park?

A: This is true at present. The design team is assuming that these areas will stay forested.

Q: The aerial photograph isn't accurate: trees aren't as bushy as shown.

A: The photograph is recent and is accurate.

Q: Presence of improvements associated with this project will devalue local properties, because they will highlight the existing lack of sidewalks, etc. in the adjacent neighborhood. Will improvements to the existing neighborhood be made?

A: Land value is based on context – what is around it. Devaluation of the existing neighborhood's properties isn't likely. The neighborhood should consult with the City on improved streetscapes. The project team would support neighborhood improvement goals.

Q: Friends of Discovery Park is opposed to additional connections to the Park shown in Option 3.

A: The proposed plans include options for discussion that may not end up being included in the final proposal.

## **Site Options**

### **Questions**

Comment: Streets in the proposals seem to be smaller than in neighborhood.

A: No, City street development standards were used; 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue West is wider than City standards. Alleys are provided – some residences would be located on pedestrian-oriented alleys, as in High Point.

Q: Are there left-over lots north of Leisy Hall?

A: Extra residual land not usable for residences would be used for open/public space.

Q: Which way do houses face in Option 2?

A: Proposed houses would face 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, but parking would be accessed from an alley behind the houses.

Q: Clarification is needed on how 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue West connects to Texas Way.

A: The intersection is a Y in some options. Southern portions of 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue West become driveways, with access points possibly located where there aren't currently trees in the existing berm.

Q: Why doesn't an option show both Leisy and Harvey Halls being reused?

A: This could be done as part of the refinement.

Q: What is the number of houses in existing neighborhood?

A: 126 immediately adjacent.

Q: Why is no traffic circle at Government Way identified in the proposal? Why does the City want connections between the existing neighborhood and the proposed development?

A: The idea of a traffic circle is not rejected, but is an SDOT issue better address through a separate process. Regarding connections, the City believes it is good urban design for neighborhoods not to be enclaves and to have some vehicular connections. A grid provides better pedestrian safety due to driver expectation that traffic could come from both directions.

Comment: No connection option should have been shown to address neighborhood concerns.

Response: City does not consider new and old development to be incompatible uses requiring separation.

Comment: West Lawton shouldn't be shown as a main thoroughfare. Traffic will flow north through the site if connections are provided.

Q: Who at the City provided input regarding neighborhood connections?

A: Plans will go to the Council for input.

Comment: 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue West should stay open.

Q: Connectivity may facilitate improvements such as traffic circles?

A: It is assumed that street improvements along 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue West would be included as part of the project.

Q: Did the City say how much connectivity it desires?

A: The project team was not told how to show connectivity by the City. Providing connectivity will allow for more even distribution of traffic, but other strategies to limit through traffic are possible – right turn in only from Government way to 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue west, closing 36<sup>th</sup> at Government Way, etc.

Q: Will The City allow a jog in the road at Government Way?

A; Realignment could be done to improve traffic and visual quality.

Q: Could a roundabout be constructed at Government Way?

A: This isn't recommended, as traffic levels and the intersection design wouldn't support it. The optimal approach would be to realign the intersection.

Q: Is a "Y" intersection connecting Texas Way and 36th Avenue West viable?

A: It would be possible, but it would be preferred to create a 90 degree intersection located further to the south.

Q: Is relocation of Texas Way possible to remove the existing "dog leg"?

A: It is possible but not advisable because of utilities running in the right of way for the road.

Q: Can creation or realignment of roads be done so that road slopes are manageable?

A: The Intersections proposed are possible and can be designed so as to have moderate slopes.

Comment: Pedestrian connections in place of proposed vehicular connections would reduce through traffic in the existing neighborhood.

A: More vehicular connections distribute traffic more evenly. Also, the proposed north-south route through the project site would facilitate good traffic flow and avoid sending traffic onto 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue West.

Q: Are offsets possible along 36<sup>th</sup> at all of the intersections?

A: This could be done but there are trades-offs, including headlights shining on houses.

Q: Would internal connectivity for the proposed development be beneficial for property values? Regarding Option 3, would lack of connectivity impact property values negatively?

A: Connectivity is beneficial in that segregation of residences by income creates problems.

Q: How can the percentage of open space and native vegetation provided be increased and better distributed? Estimate of open space areas would be good.

A: There are a number of options for configuring open space. One discussed is using an easement at front of yards along 36th Avenue West to facilitate open space plantings. The plans being presented for the development alternatives only show land use, not landscaping. The design of parks is assumed to consist of some natural/native vegetation.

Comment: Density of development isn't distributed well enough in the proposal.

A: That will be addressed, but wasn't considered in the present presentation due to time constraints.

Q: Are the houses included on the VA property under Alternative C included in housing count?

A: No, this development would add 18 units to the count.

Comment: Fewer residential units are preferable.

Q: The ponds in Option 2 are a liability, dangerous for children and facilitating spread of West Nile Virus. Would they be covered?

A: These ponds are part of a required stormwater system. They would not be covered.

Q: Inclusion of a pond is a good idea and has served as a focal point at High Point. Why are two ponds proposed instead of one?

A: Two ponds are proposed because of the site's topography.

Comment: Ponds are desirable. A successful design should be proposed, as the BRAC process is going to go ahead in any case.

Comment: Assisted housing would be best located in the western portions of the site, so as to address neighborhood concerns. The City needs to incorporate community concerns better and not change schemes between meetings.

A: The proposed plan evolves as the City learns from the process. It is unlikely that a plan will be proposed that does not include neighborhood connectivity.

Q: Locating parks in closer proximity to 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue West would help improve the neighborhood's character.

A: The project team is considering which are the best locations for parks and will consider this idea.

Q: How close will the BRAC plan be to what is actually built? Can significant changes take place from what is proposed in the Plan? Is the City going to change the plan after the Army accepts the BRAC plan?

A: The Army and HUD can evaluate the City's use of the site based on Plan intent. The agreement between the City and the Army will be public, but detailed site design isn't necessarily a component of the Plan. Doubling of development density is not going to happen, because it wouldn't be economically viable.

Q: Will Harvey and Leisy Halls be replaced by other large buildings if renovation doesn't pencil out?

A: Replacement is not likely. A location in the western portion of the project site would be better for a new large building.

Comment: Demolition of useful buildings shouldn't be considered.

Comment: Discovery Park should be a park, not developed. Density is a travesty. Hope VI projects are located in a different environment.