

Burnside Bridgehead Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 28, 2006
Meeting Notes

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**CAC Participants in Attendance:** Jim Andrews (Vice Chair), Norm Chusid, Lynne Coward, Frank Dufay, Joni Hartman, Tim Holmes (Chair), Bob Wentworth, Michael Whitmore, Chuck Willis, Brian Wilson, Bruce Wood (Opus NW), Brian Bennett (Opus NW) Michael O'Connell (PDC Project Manager).

**Other PDC and Development Team Members in Attendance:** Sarah Harpole (PDC), Lois Cohen (Zetlin Strategic Communication), Jim Brown (architect).

**Facilitator:** Sue Dicile

**Others in Attendance:** Emily Simon (KNA and AFRIEND), Katherine Krajnak (MURP) and Gilly Burlingame (Buckman Neighborhood Association).  
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Note:

"Q" = a CAC member question

"A" = an answer contributed by the presenter(s) of the agenda segment, unless otherwise noted

"C" = a CAC member comment, unless otherwise noted

(Public comments are noted in a separate section)

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- Emily Simon, representing Friends of Burnside-Couch, noted that:
 - o March 9, at 2 pm has been established as a time-certain date that the City Council will consider the east-side Burnside/Couch couplet. She urged the CAC to support full funding of the project via testimony.
 - o March 2, at 4 pm in the Lovejoy Room at City Hall has been established as the date for the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to meet with Commissioner Adams on the Burnside/Couch couplet.

ADMINISTRATION

Review of Meeting Notes From 1/10

The notes were adopted as submitted.

SUMMARY OF BRUCE WOOD'S 2/14 PRESENTATION ON DEVELOPMENT BASICS

Jim Andrews and Brian Wilson, who attended the meeting, characterized the presentation as "a session with Professor Wood", and noted that the presentation provided an informative introduction to concepts such as differing classes of developers and cap rates, illustrating basic principles for developing and financing a viable project.

BURNSIDE/COUCH TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS AND PROJECT COORDINATION

PDC Project Manager Mick O'Connell provided an overview. He noted that in addition to the opportunities identified to advocate for the east side Burnside/Couch couplet that were identified in the public comment section (*March 2nd and March 9th – see above*), there is an opportunity on March 22nd, when PDC Commissioners will be briefed on the Burnside Bridgehead project and the issues related to the Burnside-Couch couplet. He noted that, pending positive feedback, the Commission will enter into an IGA with PDOT to spend the \$300,000 set aside for preliminary engineering. He noted that the Commission would also begin work toward "breaking free" the \$5.2 million federal appropriation secured by Representative Blumenauer. He noted that there is not yet a time-certain for this meeting, but it will be in the morning. He urged CAC members to provide testimony in support of these initiatives, at this session and at the full Commission meeting, also on the 22nd. If funding goes forward subsequent to these meetings as hoped, it will enable the preliminary engineering to begin early this summer.

Other milestones noted included:

- The zone change was submitted on 2/19.
- An interim solution to the timing incongruity of the Burnside/Couch transportation improvements are being worked on. PDC has entered into discussions with PDOT on issues such as:
 - Signalization and traffic routing across the bridge and on MLK that could enable the left turn from the bridge. Kittleson & Associates are working on the analyses for the next discussions with PDOT.

Q: Why can't south-bound traffic be moved from the south side of Block 76, in a "create-a-chunk-of-the-couplet" strategy, that could anticipate eventual full build-out?

C: A problem with the turn at 6th Avenue is that freight can't navigate that turn there. It can't be accommodated except on Grand Avenue. The right turn from Burnside is too difficult.

A: We will present the idea to PDOT and Kittleson for analysis.

Q: Strategically, should we advocate for the whole build-out now, or for an interim alternative?

A: (Public) Friends of Burnside/Couch views it as counter-productive to advocate for interim fixes now. The federal funding as already been allocated in the amount that was committed. This is the time to advocate for full funding within the time frame necessary for this project. This isn't just a road project. It is a streetscape project that will energize this whole east side area.

Q: What are all of the viable options?

A: Not building the couplet is not an option. This project requires the build-out. The only question is timing. Certainty of commitment and timing are necessary for the project to move forward.

Q: So the only viable options are complete build-out in the near term, or an interim solution with the complete build-out to follow within a specific time period.

A: That is correct.

C: It is important to heat up the discussion by making sure that the City understands the importance of Burnside/Couch to the development potential at both ends of the eastside couplet.

C: This committee and the Burnside/Couch couplet advocates should serve to keep momentum going to move the complete eastside couplet forward.

Q: What is needed to demonstrate commitment of the full Council?

A: We need a commitment via a Council vote to funding by a certain date. We can't get budgeted funds now because funds are appropriated annually. But we can get direction to staff.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the following consensus was reached:

- The whole east side couplet must be built.
- We have already sent a letter, so now testimony will be more important. As many CAC members as possible should testify, as they can present both the perspective of the CAC and of the constituency that they represent on the CAC. The impact of the couplet on the entire area should be articulated, not solely on the Burnside Bridgehead project.

A copy of the resolution to be submitted to Council, to direct PDOT to begin preliminary engineering on the East Burnside/Couch couplet was distributed.

PRELIMINARY PROJECT PROGRAM

Opus development team member Brian Bennett and architect Jim Brown made a presentation. They noted that they:

- Want feedback from the CAC prior to moving into the design phase.
- Want the CAC to understand the development constraints at the project, and how the project works, from the surface down, so that it can discuss what should happen "on top".

A stationary diagram and a simulated diagram of the project were illustrated. The diagrams showed buildings of different colors, suggesting different uses. Jim Brown noted the following “things we found out to arrive at the test-fit ideas”:

- The street grid affords a view of downtown that is an important element to retain.
- The alignment of streets is problematic for elements like turn movements. Accommodating that will require modifications. (*The diagram illustrates and 3rd Avenue moved to the east in an elbow at Block 76*). Note that this does not impact the couplet.
- The project underground is critical. All below plaza level is very expensive. A design dimension was selected based on the width of a parking space, to enable more efficient parking structure.
- The residential pieces will fit easily almost anywhere in the project. It is more difficult to position and enliven the retail elements.
- Movement of 3rd Avenue creates a better plaza opportunity.
- The look and feel of the plaza is important for retail.
- There needs to be an easy way to access retail from the surface. It was clear that a more navigable parking structure with more efficiency was needed. On Block 76, the diagram illustrates retail at grade, with parking above it.
- Setting the project up in phases is more practical from the standpoint of financing and availability of materials such as steel and glass which require long lead times.

Other “givens” were noted as including:

- Some tall structure on Block 76, with something in front that is shorter, to preserve views. Other pieces of the project, above plaza level, have a range of options.
- The final mix of occupants will be a mix of the “preferred list” and of “whoever else shows up”.
- Retail has an ideal “depth” of space that has to be accommodated.

Q: In the future, will it be possible to build up further?

A: The whole project can be built up to 1 million sq ft. We should put in the structure now that would accommodate growth.

Q: Why isn't all the parking put underground?

A: The project sits on the 100 year flood plain, and some areas are not suitable for underground parking. There is also Block 69 in the wings. While there are some issues with that block, if driven by demand it would be worth getting those issues addressed. Parking is the single biggest cost to the project, with each parking space costing \$35,000, so the project can't afford to build more parking than it needs. At \$35,000 per space, that equates to a cost of \$10 million per floor. The bank won't lend for it. The only way to acquire additional parking is for a public agency to invest.

Q: Can PDC allocate funds to support additional parking?

A: That hasn't been specifically addressed yet.

C: Not all CAC members would support expensive additional parking.

Q: (Referring to the green-colored building on the diagram) Why is that building not self-sustaining with parking?

A: Actually, that building does have a below-grade parking structure.

Q: What constitutes “adequate” parking? Is there a definitive formula?

A: A study to define the parking needs for this specific project is being done. There is a general rule of thumb that says 2 x 1 for residential and 4 x 1 for retail, but this project is much more complex, including variations in day and night uses.

C: While I like the proposal for the project in general, it seems oriented toward the view to the west. How will the project relate to east side areas and vistas?

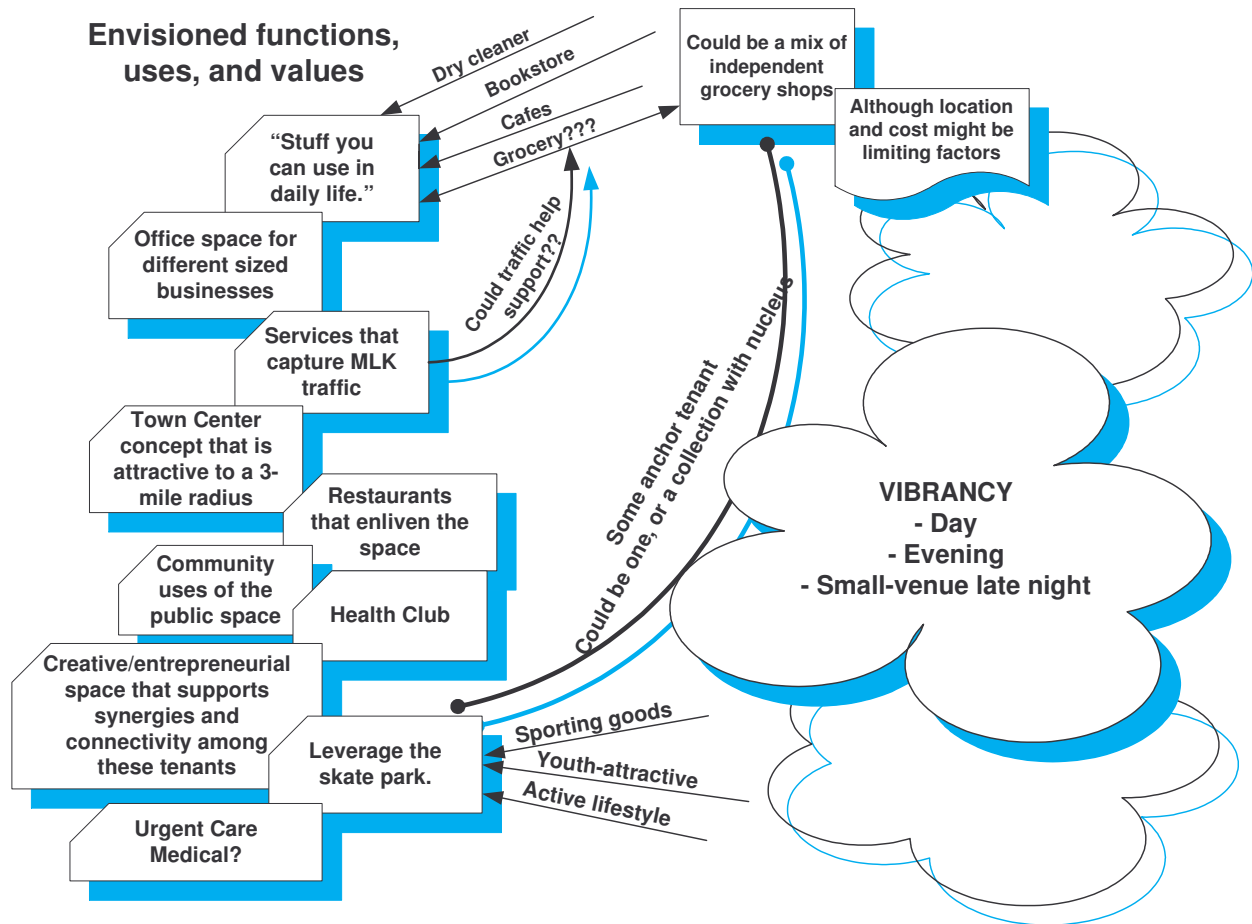
A: The building will create a landmark when coming across the Burnside Bridge to the east side. Also there are views to the east, with good views of the Lloyd Center area. Also using the stair-step form to provide a welcoming gateway.

A: The east side impact is a good point. We want the project to serve as a catalyst for the east side. There is another catalytic opportunity at 12th and Sandy. We want Burnside and Couch to turn into vibrant streets.

- C: The plaza works well as shown in the diagram, including the circulation pattern. I also like the way the reconfiguration of 3rd Avenue at Block 76 supports the plaza. A connection from the plaza to Burnside should be considered.
- Q: The plaza design used to have an upper level that stretched along the west side of the project. That doesn't appear to be in tonight's diagrams. Why not?
- A: That's just in this schematic. That area can be terraced back.
- C: A concern is that flex space isn't shown. Flex space would give a uniqueness to the east side and the project. The project should be "creative class"-friendly.
- A: Currently there is no space that could be considered purely flex space on the front side of the building. We had a preliminary discussion with Brad Maslin about how to accommodate flex space. We learned that placing flex space in the front is very expensive. From Brad's point of view, the difference between creative space and office space is in the finishes. There is not much cost differential, so making it financially feasible is difficult.
- A: Flex space seems to mean larger modules that are more square, which creates a "mausoleum" type space, almost as if you are constructing "bad office space". So, one thought is to dedicate better space to flex purposes – higher up with views, in a typical office environment but designed to be flexible. People are on the east side in order to get less expensive rates, so the last thing we want to do is create expensive bad space.
- C: Under that scenario, I would be concerned about the height of the space for flex uses.
- C: Regarding flex space, the cheaper we can make it the more "creative" it becomes.
- Q: Is retail less expensive?
- A: Retail is altogether different. For one thing, you can't have retail below grade.
- Q: What could go in the large retail space illustrated on the diagram?
- A: For example, a large grocery.
- C: (Development team) Keep in mind that there is only 115,000 sq ft available. That is less than 3 city blocks. It isn't a lot of space. On this project, we can't make up for a mistake with mass.
- C: (Development team) We really only have enough space to do one thing really well.
- Q: How is truck access accommodated?
- A: Not determined yet.

BRAINSTORMING ABOUT USES AND ATMOSPHERE OF THE PROJECT

The facilitator posed the following question to CAC members: *"Given the potentials and limitations of the site that have been outlined, what kinds of uses, functions and values do you imagine at the site?"* Individual members' ideas were added to a white board diagram. The diagram on the next page illustrates the white board diagram from the discussion.



SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS FROM THIS MEETING

- CAC support for full funding and project-supportive timing of Burnside/Couch eastside transportation improvements. Key upcoming opportunities to advocate for the transportation improvements necessary for the project and overall eastside streetscape include:
 - March 2, 4pm, Stakeholder Advisory Committee/Commissioner Adams; Lovejoy Room, City Hall.
 - March 9, 2 pm, City Council re eastside Burnside/Couch couplet; Council Chambers, City Hall.
 - March 22, time to be announced, PDC Commissioners' discussion of Burnside/Couch couplet and consideration of IGA with PDOT re preliminary engineering; Commission Meeting Room.
- Developer presentation of the preliminary project program, including constraints of the project and the site.
- CAC concerns and interests regarding the project program, including parking (location and adequacy), relationship of the project to other eastside areas, plaza design, accommodation of flex space within the project.
- CAC members' preliminary discussion of the functions, uses, and values envisioned at the project.

NEXT MEETING

March 14th. The meeting will be a site visit, from 4 – 5 pm. Meeting on the Corner of NE 3rd and Couch.

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by the CAC facilitator.

Materials distributed in meeting packet: 01/10/06 notes
 Materials distributed at this meeting: Draft ordinance.