

NORTH OLD TOWN/CHINATOWN REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #1

OCTOBER 17, 2006 ♦ 1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.

PDC COMMISSION ROOM

Present: Doreen Binder, John Case, Brian Ferschweiler, Patrick Gortmaker, Richard Harris, Heather Bowser, Betty Jean Lee, Richard Louie, Brian McCarl, Tim McCarron, June Schumann, Carly Riter, Steve Walti

Absent: Greg Goodman, Gloria Lee, Louis Lee, Carol McCreary

I. Welcome and Introductions

- Art Hendricks introduced the meeting and gave an overview of the meeting purpose and agenda. He explained what was in the packet of information given to the committee members, which included the committee charter, background on the North Old Town/Chinatown Redevelopment Strategy, a project workplan, study area maps, project-related information, and a comment sheet for committee advice.
- Peter Englander introduced himself as the Downtown Waterfront Development Manager and provided an update of PDC projects.
 - The Downtown Waterfront Urban Renewal Area is due to expire in April 2008. The Westside Study is being prepared to consider the annexation of a portion of the Downtown Waterfront district to the River District.
 - The North Old Town/Chinatown Redevelopment Strategy initially evolved from the Old Town Chinatown Visions Committee and the proposed expansion plans for the Blanchet House. \$2 million was earmarked for the expansion of the Blanchet House in order to better support their clients and the goals of the neighborhood.
 - The North Old Town/Chinatown Redevelopment Strategy evolved from the need to provide a roadmap moving forward with the Blanchet proposal and to determine the redevelopment feasibility of the blocks surrounding the Classical Chinese Garden.
- Introduction of Stakeholder Committee Members, Consultant Team, and PDC staff
- Sarah Harpole announced that the next Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting was tentatively scheduled for the second week of November. A notice would be sent out to members to confirm availability.

II. Introduction by Consultant Team and Approach Overview

- Team individuals' backgrounds
 - David Horsley
 - Born and raised in Colorado; majored in Environmental Architecture; has an interest in travel; worked in Boston, Berkeley, and Portland, and on projects in China, Vietnam, Kazakhstan and Angola; has extensive experience in large and small-scale architecture, including new buildings and renovations; has previously worked with PDC, citizen advisory groups, and private developers.
 - Joann Le
 - Born in Saigon; lived in rural Wisconsin; attended graduate school at Berkeley; has eighteen years of experience in architecture, including art museums and libraries; formed DAO Architecture in 2004; has a special interest in historic Old Towns and Chinatowns; has worked

on a broad range of projects, such as a Vietnamese community center, restaurants in outer SE and NE (including SE 82nd).

- Clark Worth
 - Moved to Portland in 1960; has worked as a consultant since 1980; involved with projects within the central city; has worked previously with DH; worked on a strategy to promote arts and culture as a driver of activity in Hillsboro; stated that part of this strategy could be used for North Old Town/Chinatown.
- Kathy Fong Stephens
 - Her great grand-father moved to Portland over a century ago and was involved in the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association; has many personal and family-related accounts of activities in the neighborhood; has extensive public policy and non-profit experience profits in the San Francisco Bay Area and Portland; is excited to hear ideas and concerns about North Old Town/Chinatown and share her connection to the neighborhood.
- Approach Overview will include:
 - Analysis of the study area
 - Gathering information from stakeholders
 - Formation of a redevelopment concept for the study area
 - Exploring ways to stimulate the revitalization of North Old Town/Chinatown and how to draw people and activity to the area

III. District Developments and Areas of Interest

- DH highlighted the boundaries of the study area shown on the map handout. The overview of the approach included discussion of the following projects:
 - Blanchet proposal
 - Expansion with a mix of uses, including areas for reception, meeting, dining, and kitchen with housing and offices above.
 - Tri-Met rail extension
 - University of Oregon in the White Stag Building
 - Mercy Corps proposal for its headquarters in the Skidmore Fountain Building
 - PNCA has expressed interest in moving to the North Old Town/Chinatown area
- J L summarized the findings from EH's Study Area SWOC Analysis (Economic Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges), including:
 - Historical character of the area
 - The need to do more with less and for leaner financial pro-formas
 - Emerging housing markets for young professionals and young residents
 - The need to strengthen on-street activity levels and increasing activity at key intersections and nodes

IV. Walking Tour of District

- Study Area Walking Map indicating Highlight Sites:
 - Davis Festival Street
 - 3rd Avenue Street Improvements
 - Classical Chinese Garden
 - Royal Palm Hotel

- Flanders Festival Street
- PDC/City Parking Lot
- NW Natural Parking Lot
- Dirty Duck
- Future MAX Alignment
- Historic Fire House
- Alaska Copper Building
- Goodman Parking Lot
- Towncar Garage
- CCC/Transition Projects
- Green Gables
- JBH Planned Redevelopment – East of Pearl
- Blanchet House
- Old Town Lofts
- Pacific Tower
- Fish Block
- 4th Avenue Street Improvements
- On the Davis Festival Street, it was noted that the buildings on both sides of the street can serve to contribute activity and activate the street level.
- Block 26 (also known as the Fish Block) was the former site of the Portland Fish Market and is now owned by Chinatown Investors and Northwest Natural.
- The Chinese Classical Garden receives around 140,000-150,000 visitors annually; about 80% of these visitors come from outside Oregon and Washington. The blocks surrounding the garden should be activated to capitalize on this opportunity.
- There is potential to double-load the Flanders festival street with the full or partial development of the parking lot at 3rd and Flanders.
- The small yellow asterisks on the walking map on Glisan indicate the heart of the study area.
- The future light rail line will travel down Hoyt at 4th. The East of Pearl Building is adjacent and will be a seven-story LEED-certified development with ground floor retail with offices and a restaurant above. Five floors have been leased; tenants are needed for the other two floors.
- DB of Transitions Projects explained the nature of the services provided at the facility located at Glisan and 5th; among the services provided are:
 - A true service center where people living on the streets can come in for a full range of services (shelter, mail, laundry vouchers, housing assistance, and showers).
 - A ninety-bed shelter for men providing shelter for four to five weeks. After that, the tenants can stay at a large facility on Glisan.
 - Women can use the center to sign up for services and use the shower facilities, but the women's shelter is housed at a different location.
 - RH of Central City Concern noted that there is a 62-unit housing development located above with community rooms and kitchens.
- DH pointed out the second yellow asterisk on the walking map at 4th and Glisan and noted that there is a connection looking down to Burnside. He stated that possible improvements could be explored to strengthen this connection and extend the district up to Hoyt.
- PE stated that the new lighting improvements on 3rd and 4th have had a dramatic

impact and have made the view to the Embassy Suites building more visible, establishing an historic corridor.

- RH stated there was cobblestone on the street 20 years ago on 4th between Glisan and Hoyt. The group discussed whether the cobblestone could be restored, but there were feasibility issues related to ADA requirements.

V. Schedule and Workplan Overview

- DH referred the committee to the expanded and abbreviated schedules included in the packet. The workplan included:
 - Identifying a location for Blanchet House
 - Exploring the uses and configurations of the buildings that would be most economically feasible.
 - Conducting a charrette on three consecutive mornings in early December that would consist of a workshop to come up with design ideas and give feedback.
 - In February, there would be additional refinement of the implementation strategy and a roadmap would be established to make the specific goals achievable.
 - In March, a draft report would be completed.

VI. Project Goals Discussion

- CW and KFS led the project goals discussion to gather committee advice, which would help to formulate a long-term vision and determine key elements necessary to create a vibrant mixed-use, 24-hour neighborhood in North Old Town/Chinatown.
- BF highlighted the need to create more workforce and transitional housing.
- BL noted that Asians have been drawn to SE 82nd and that there are safety and parking issues that discourage people from coming to the North Old Town/Chinatown district. The area needs to draw from the elements that are creating a thriving Asian community around SE 82nd, including a community center, schools, and retail.
- JS observed that there are missing elements, such as a bakery, grocery stores, a library, etc. In particular, there are no destinations in the northern end of the district.
- RH stressed that there is need to deal with the symptoms of homelessness and find solutions to end homelessness and create new housing. At the same time, the face of homelessness can be made less visible by moving the activity of social service organizations inside.
- BM stated that there is a physical and economic isolation and the district needs to be connected with the downtown core. There needs to be more emphasis on North Old Town/Chinatown as part of the larger Central City strategy, including housing resources, social services, and coming up with a balanced mix of uses while still preserving the historic character and diversity of the neighborhood.
- RL noted that the area is drawing more people to live here and it is necessary to provide basic essentials like grocery stores.
- SW stated that it was necessary to make the area a destination for people by making it a desirable place and attracting people to stay in the neighborhood longer with grocery stores, fitness centers, and other amenities.
- CR stressed that it was necessary to maintain continuity and to activate ground floors and storefronts to draw more people.

- JC stated that there is foot traffic to work and back each day along 5th coming from the housing on the other side of the train tracks, tourists, and train arrivals. There needs to be a designated walking path to encourage more walking down 5th and increase safety perceptions. Also, the perception of the homeless is not accurate; they are generally harmless, but are not perceived this way.
- JS agreed that the neighborhood is poorly signed. There is very little information that would help provide direction to the river, restaurants, and businesses. Providing directional signage, kiosks, and visitor services would address this problem. Currently, there is nowhere to pick up maps when getting off the train. We need to design the area to be more people-friendly.
- BL suggested that a highway sign could direct visitors to the Classical Chinese Garden.
- DB stated that there was nothing to walk to when passing under the Chinatown gates. The area needs more destinations and more mixed-use buildings to be activated.
- RH noted that housing targeted at the middle-income levels was missing and that the whole spectrum of housing needs should be served.
- DB suggested that a small boutique hotel could be added to the neighborhood.
- JS promoted the identification of historical structures and added that the area needed to do a better job of disseminating information and providing destinations for people. There could be walking tours and better signs for people to attract them to the neighborhood.
- KFS noted that there are Asian grocery stores on Sandy and SE 82nd. The neighborhood here could benefit from an Asian bakery.
- RL stated that the neighborhood also should provide community centers and more senior housing.
- BL also agreed that the neighborhood needs a library.
- BM observed that there had been earlier attempts to attract seniors to North Old Town/Chinatown. A small number were attracted to Pacific Tower, but the larger issue was the cultural forces pushing people to live in Beaverton and outlying suburbs. There should be a push to attract Asian businesses to the area which could serve as an anchor. Attracting a major trading company or other Asian business would bring Asian workers to the area.

VII. Wrap-up and Next Steps

- CW stated that interviews would be conducted to collect more ideas, information, and advice from the community.
- KFS asked the committee for additional contacts for outreach and others who would be interested in attending the committee meetings.
- DH and JL stated that there would be a lot of activity in the upcoming months and thanked the committee for their time.
- Please see attached for discussion notes and committee advice.

**North Old Town / Chinatown
Stakeholder Advisory Committee 10/17/06**

“YOUR VISION” – Discussion Notes

- Workforce housing
- Parking
- Safety
- Asian population draws community center
- Destination services in north end (bakery, library, etc.)
- Solutions to end homelessness
- Housing above services: move homeless indoors
- Connecting Old Town / Chinatown with downtown core – make it part of Central City and boost economic diversity
- Grocery store within walking distance
- Services that cater to businesses for meetings, etc.
- Activate storefronts – street level attractions
- Foot traffic – from housing to work, train and bus, tourists. Encourage use of 5th Avenue as pedestrian route – safe, pedestrian-oriented
- Signage – directional / informational for tourists / visitors. Kiosks, people-friendly
- ODOT directional highway signs to Chinese Garden
- More multi-cultural destinations – “what’s beyond the gate?”
- Mixed-use buildings – main floors with activities, housing above
- Range of housing options, including seniors
- Small boutique hotel
- Historical – signage, arts / culture elements into neighborhood design

North Old Town / Chinatown

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Kickoff Meeting

October 17, 2006

Committee Advice

1. *As you think about North Old Town / Chinatown and how it could develop over the next decades, what do you see as key elements to create a vibrant, mixed use, 24 hour / day urban neighborhood?*
 - Workforce housing, more parking, safety, more Asian businesses, community center for homeless, grocery store, more community involvement by those who live-work in area.
 - Safety.
 - Pedestrian movement to destinations.
 - Positive night life experience.
 - Grocery stores, restaurants (Asian).
 - Small hotel.
 - Mixed use housing.
 - Build capacity with homeless services to accommodate customers inside.
 - Community center and grocery stores, parking.
 - Advertising issues that are a by-product of the high concentration of social services.
 - Middle income housing, service and destination retail, student housing for U of O, active ground floor uses, nightlife / entertainment / cultural uses.
 - Retail and services to make people shop, gather, and feel at home. Restaurant and deli, EOP.
 - People friendly designed streets, building, signage. Retail and services that can be destinations for pedestrians. Arts, culture, and history as ingredients of design.
2. *How would you evaluate the North Old Town / Chinatown District?*

Strengths:

 - Many things are within walking distance. Very community oriented.
 - Unique history, visitor curiosity.
 - Chinese Garden.
 - Gate – somewhat diverse.
 - Diversity with housing and income.
 - History.
 - Inventory of historic / architecturally significant buildings.
 - Public services, culture, Chinese Gardens.

- Rich, historical area waiting to be discovered by the metro area, tourist bureau, etc.

Weaknesses:

- Parking, changing the perception of Old Town.
- Perceived safety issues.
- Lack of stores – groceries.
- Closed storefronts, homeless on street.
- Safety.
- Perceptions. Ability to draw / support market rate activities.
- Perceived public safety issues. Perceived isolated area due to lack of ground floor continuity.
- Not enough to do or reason to stay.
- Under-developed, under-valued area by big developers, city planners.

Opportunities:

- Many empty storefronts.
- Community ready to take a chance on each other.
- Ready for creative development. Success of 3rd/4th Ave energized residents, workers, etc.
- Historic structures.
- New beginning.
- Available land that's publicly owned.
- Great old buildings. Vacant lots = build to suit floor plates for new uses: grocery, mid box-large box "urbanized" retail aka target, Asian grocery, etc.
- Unending.

Challenges:

- How people perceive the homeless population. More diversity among businesses.
- Historic sites – which are too expensive to renovate.
- Perception of safety.
- Perceptions.
- No tax abatement program to build the type of housing we need. It is difficult to middle income, urban housing towers without subsidy.
- Fire station at the base of the steel bridge is not attractive.