

# Columbia Downtown Focus Group

Minutes from Meeting May 24, 2006

Issued: June 13, 2006

## Review of Focus Group Meeting Minutes from May 3, 2006

- Was the question on the bottom of page 3 answered? How will members of the Design Advisory Panel be selected?  
*DPZ Reply:* Panel will be appointed by the County Executive, confirmed by the County Council. Legislation will define membership requirements, not fully defined yet.
- Liz Bobo sent a letter to the Focus Group that Evan Coren gave out at the meeting. It should be so noted in the minutes.
- Lloyd Knowles was not in attendance.

## FAQ # 19: Draft Zoning Regulations for CDO District

Steve Lafferty introduced the FAQ discussion:

- Issue: should Downtown be extracted from the New Town (NT)? DPZ decided to use an overlay approach. The current NT zoning process does not give enough detail early in the process, nor does it give enough criteria for the Planning Board to make decisions about site plans.
- Explained the components of Downtown Development Plan (DDP).
- Described approval process through Zoning Board (ZB) and Planning Board (PB).
- Asked the Focus Group to especially provide feedback on the criteria to ensure that these are faithful to the Charrette.

### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

- Please explain the Office of Law's concern about referencing the Columbia Downtown Master Plan (CDMP). What has to be spelled out in the ordinance? Why not just refer to another document that has Zoning Board approval? Page 4 says "implements the objectives of the CDMP", is this a problem?  
*DPZ Reply:* Zoning can refer to the objectives of another document, but cannot refer to another document as the source of density requirements; those requirements must be in the zoning.
- Is Adequate Public Facilities (APF) ordinance appropriate to carry out what is in the plan?  
*DPZ Reply:* We may need some revisions to APF to ensure that it is appropriate to Downtown.
- Who is responsible or accountable for maintaining mix within the subdistricts as shown on the Table on Page 2?  
*DPZ Reply:* The dwelling units and square footage numbers that are adopted in the zoning must be adopted in the Downtown Development Plan. DPZ will track the numbers. We cannot enforce a minimum, but can enforce and track a maximum.
- Who has ability to judge if Adequate Public Facilities (APF) is met? Would it have to be done before PB? Makes more sense prior to SDP approval, maximum limits puts pressure to use max rather than setting APF compliance as the limits. How does the staging happen, how do you ensure it through this document?  
*DPZ Reply:* GGP will need to prepare a staging plan. Their staging/phasing plan must be approved by the County Council as part of overlay district approval. Do we need criteria that will help the Zoning Board decide if staging plan is approvable?
- Is it possible to deny GGP the right to build first at the Crescent?  
*DPZ Reply:* GGP has indicated that priority has been to do infill in other districts before Crescent. That has also been the message from the Charrette and Focus Group. We would like to evaluate the staging proposed in a DDP. Need to be flexible enough to respond to market.

- Commercial development could proceed without new zoning. Can we guide where residential would go?
- We can define which roads and connections (infrastructure) must be done before building can be developed. The plan does not have to specify where everything goes, but it should have to specify what has to be done to get approval for a particular project.
- Won't developers do the easiest site first (the Crescent) if all district plans are approved on a DDP?
- Mixed-use projects need to be staged on a time basis or competition will be a problem. Need to define what has to happen first to make this work. The first project must be successful or the whole Downtown will fail. It will be hard to get the best project done in your priority area unless you demand it to be done there. Do not let desire of potential tenant drive what happens. It is hard to tell someone who wants to build somewhere in 2008 that they have to wait until 2018.
- Why not do steps 2 (Downtown zoning change) and 4 (all NT zoning change) at the same time?  
*DPZ Reply:* All New Town needs updating, but the rest of New Town includes 14,000 acres 50,000 parcels. Other parties need to be involved and it will be a complicated process. Best to start with Downtown first.
- GGP would like all New Town be on a parallel tract. New Town overall should not be too complicated.
- The overlay approach pulls 493 acres of Downtown out of New Town? Concerned about doing Downtown differently.  
*DPZ Reply:* Downtown still is New Town zoning, but with an overlay with new rules.
- Why can't we encourage mixed use under New Town without the new overlay? Process is there except for Planning Board criteria, couldn't they just be added? What do we mean by Charrette Plan? What is the status of the Master Plan?  
*DPZ Reply:* The Charrette Vision Plan is part of the Master Plan and is well documented. We cannot include this in New Town zoning, since in any one zone the rules have to apply to all parcels. You can't make them apply to some, but not to others.
- Concerned about secondary planning area that was taken out of Vision Plan. Wilde Lake has formed a Village Center Task Force. Zoning for all Columbia should be handled in context at same time.  
*DPZ Reply:* Wilde Lake and Oakland Mills can be working on their plans. Need to decide if Downtown criteria are suitable for elsewhere, perhaps some villages.
- May need process for Village Centers if they need changes to New Town.
- The Vision Plan is a vision for thirty years, can't make finite details now. We can stipulate APF and design review. If developer meets APF and design review, a project could move forward.
- How did the Governor Warfield Parkway residential projects come about? Were they marketed by GGP or did builders approach GGP? Can GGP make any decision it wants about development?
- Usually builders come to the owner, responding to the market. Owners evaluate the proposal. In overlay zoning the decisions get defined in the DDP. The toughest is the timing.
- Page 1 Action 2, what is meant by "Land use has been met" for all New Town or for New Town except Downtown?  
*DPZ Reply:* GGP has almost accounted for all land and units in New Town. Only a few acres are not accounted for. We would like to finalize that accounting. We need to set up process to account for all land for New Town and a process for how to deal with infill once accounting is complete.
- Were projects on Governor Warfield Parkway done under current zoning? Who asked question about the appropriateness of these projects in that location?  
*DPZ Reply:* They comply with current NT zoning and residential designation. The PB reviewed and approved all plans. DDP will provide more criteria about type and location of development.
- A Staging timeline is still lacking. Thirty years is too far away. We need targets for 10, 20 years, etc. so the public can have some expectations.
- Need to make judgments, can't change a General Plan due to a temporary 3-year market cycle. Need flexibility but need a "leash" so that a boom economy does not lead to over building or imbalance in the mix.  
*DPZ Reply:* Residential is limited through APF allocations, haven't needed a limit for office.

- Role of developer is very central. Who establishes minimum and maximum? The developer? Page five implies that the developer has no responsibility for infrastructure unless exceeds low range of development.  
*DPZ Reply:* Page seven, the bullet is wrong. The developer does have to do infrastructure. Could we get extra improvements if the low range is exceeded?
- Who can apply for district: Any owner?  
*DPZ Reply:* Need GGP to activate it as largest owner, over 200 acres.
- Won't the overlay have holes in it?  
*DPZ Reply:* Yes, but only the property owner can petition for a change.
- Can we do a better job so that staging is coordinated and controlled relevant to CDMP, so it is not done piecemeal? See page 4, item 4, DDP is a separate plan for each petition/owner. Could we make all owners participate?  
*DPZ Reply:* That would be the desire.
- Need GGP to be able to go forward even without other owners.
- Who will make development limits?  
*DPZ Reply:* CDMP will set maximum and minimum, then the Zoning Board will have the authority to approve the DDP proposal presented by GGP and other property owners.
- Concern that the market will drive the planning and this document gives too much flexibility. The public should have more input. This is not forward looking without green building. We need trade offs to address social values.
- Sub-division process needs to be taken into account. How will that process change?  
*DPZ Reply:* Don't envision any significant changes in subdivision process.
- GGP is doing a plan with a consultant to comply with the CDMP. Will submit in about a year and half. Will come up with targets. Need to diagram steps that each party has to go through to submit and approve a plan.
- Don't see how a DDP can be done without all owners. It will be piecemeal. What if street goes through someone's property?
- If an overall plan is in place, sequence may be less important. Most important is getting infrastructure.  
*DPZ Reply:* Need to review a few key points to understand how this all comes together.
  1. Acreage – How many acres are in Downtown and who owns what? GGP owns the majority of land (about 250 acres), CA open space (about 150) which has little development potential, roads and public lands (may be 50 acres) and other property owners such as Toby's, Dick Talkin, the Sheraton, the Mall anchors, etc. (maybe 50 already developed).
  2. Density – The Charrette established it and it will be incorporated into the zoning. The chart is blank because the numbers need adjusting to add the Mall subdistrict.
  3. CDMP – Requires that everyone who does development or redevelopment in Downtown (developers, CA, the county) comply with the Charrette Vision.
- What is mission of this Focus Group? Is our goal to take document to next step, refine it so that we endorse it when it goes to Council?
- The new County Council needs to review and endorse Vision Plan.
- The Vision Plan does not reflect what people said at Charette about mixed income housing. The Charrette wanted Downtown to be mixed income. The Focus Group wants 10% middle and 10% moderate-income housing. The Master Plan still has 10% and 5%.
- Amenities are one reason you need more detail on the plan. This plan is developer-driven. The plan needs to drive the developer.

## Schedule

- The traffic study will not be ready for the June 14 meeting. It will be deferred until June 28 at the earliest. We will discuss the pedestrian inventory at the next meeting.
- DPZ will do process diagram on zoning (showing what needs to be on which plans).
- Focus Group wants the Traffic report 15 days in advance, so may have to delay meeting until July
- Other Barn offered for meeting on June 28.

## **Attendees:**

### **Focus Group**

Liz Bobo  
Brown, Maggie  
Godine, Doug (Al Edwards)  
Gray, Karen  
Kirsch, Phil  
Laidig, Patricia  
Malone, Jud  
Mugane, Bridget  
Orenstein, Toby  
Pivar, Mary  
Richardson, Lee  
Saleem, Mohammed  
Sosinsky, Tim  
Talkin, Richard  
Tennenbaum, Robert  
Tousey, Hugh

### **Press**

Blakely, Andrei

### **Council Reps**

Templin, Scott

### **Guests**

DeLuca, Mark  
Schwarzman, Diane

### **Public**

Albanese, Tony  
Baer, Joyce  
Birnie, Dunbar  
Broida, Gail  
Broida, Joel  
Brown, Todd  
Chambers, Joann  
Cole, Ray  
Coren, Evan  
England, Brian  
Joel Gallihue  
Harris, Ben  
Hekimian, Alex  
Ketley, Jeanne  
Klein, Alan  
Knowles, Lloyd  
Lapine, Chuck  
McLaughlin, Jo  
Mikkelsen, Lisa  
Orenstein, Harold  
Rowe, Bill  
Santos, William  
Schnackenberg, Barbara  
Toback, Rhoda  
Vogel, Rob  
Wengel, Linda

### **DPZ**

McLaughlin, Marsha  
Lafferty, Stephen  
Hilsenrath, Mina  
Blaumanis, Dace  
Clay, Randy  
Mackey, Bill

*T:\Shared\DECP\Columbia TC\Post Charrette\Focus Group\Agenda-Minutes\Focus Group Minutes 052406.doc*