Summary of Workshop 3: CIMP Alternatives

Held on Wednesday April 21, 2010
Van Ness Elementary School Auditorium
5:30 PM – 8:00 PM
and
Thursday April 22, 2010
Eastern Market – North Hall
8:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Bruce Jackson, Headquarters Marine Corps, welcomed and thanked participants for coming to the workshop. A brief presentation was given that provided background information about the Community Integrated Master Plan (CIMP) similar to what was covered at the beginning of Workshops 1 and 2, and an overview of the planning process. The presentation was followed by an open house session where participants could view workshop materials and posters and speak directly with the CIMP Planning Team. The workshop was concluded with an open forum discussion on the materials presented.

Workshop 3 focused on presenting potential alternatives and site layout options for relocating the Marine Bachelor Enlisted Quarters (BEQ) and other potential shared use facilities. In response to the last workshop, the study area has been narrowed to four potential site locations, each with several layout options:

- Marine Barracks Washington (MBW) Annex (four layout options);
- Square 882 (three layout options);
- Exxon and Virginia Avenue Park (four layout options); and
- Washington Navy Yard (three layout options).

A fifth site and design plan was brought forward by a group of developers and land owners, Square 929/930 and adjacent area, that overlaps slightly with the Exxon and Virginia Avenue Park site. Each site layout option was presented on a large-scale poster with a corresponding map showing the shifts in land use and the pros/cons of the layout. Print-outs (8 ½ x 11 size) of all the posters were also available for review and comment. All of these sites and alternative layout schemes are provided on the website for review and comment: www.sedistrictcimp.com. Also in response to the last workshop, the website has been updated to offer "blog-style" commenting for each of the layout options. Participants were encouraged to provide comments on the workshop materials in a variety of methods: filling out a comment form, submitting electronically through the website, by marking directly on the posters or a handout of the poster, or during the open forum session of the Workshop.

After the open house session of the Workshop, participants were re-assembled to facilitate an open forum discussion of the layout options and workshop materials. Discussions and comments are summarized below.

General

- In general, participants were overwhelmed with amount of information and were impressed with the amount of work that has been accomplished since the last workshop.
- Participants questioned whether there was already a consensus or preferred option, some stating that they would prefer not to spend time commenting on an option that is likely going to be eliminated. Another resident wanted to know if the plan brought forward by the property owners (Square 929/930) got a "gold star" and was the preferred option. The Marine Corps responded that there was not a preferred option and the purpose of this workshop was to hear from the public on all of these options.
- A participant wanted to know if any of the planning would be affected by CSX plans for the Virginia Avenue tunnel expansion plans and how would the potential train route under Square 929 affect security at the site. The Marine Corps noted that none of the BEQ options would result in facilities overlying the tunnel. Additionally, whereas the period of construction for the tunnel expansion project will be a short-term impact; the planning horizon for the CIMP is long-term.
- The President of Sports on the Hill stated he significantly opposes a reduction of sports fields and noted that there are already logistical concerns for reserving fields.
- In response to comments, the timeline for the project and decision-making was reviewed. It was noted that currently, one more workshop is scheduled for May 22, followed by a charette in September. The alternatives to be carried forward in the CIMP need to be determined by then.
- The Marine Corps noted they are seeking input and community insight for the reuse options for Building 20.
- Some commented that the overall evolution of the neighborhood does not seem to be a concern incorporated into the CIMP planning process – the project would result in a large government footprint in the middle of the community that has little/nothing to do with the community itself. The smaller BEQ requirement, which was the initial driver for the project, is being expanded to a larger more significant footprint. To construct something up that might work for today, but would be an eyesore in the future needs to be considered.
- One participant noted that they would favor incorporation of creative use of existing buildings into site planning – this is more environmentally friendly, less destructive and can be as good as new construction.

- From long-time residents (generations of families) – they are looking for environmentally friendly area for children and grandchildren to play that is safe and currently do not see that in a plan.
- A resident noted that Navy/Marine Corps do not bring a lot to the area in terms of economics and stated that the community needs to look at what furthers the neighborhood and what does not. It was noted that virtually all of the plans do not do this, with most of them take the community back. Regarding the mix of uses, status quo is not acceptable with vacant buildings, etc.
- A representative from the Capital Riverfront Business Improvement District (BID) stated they are trying to balance development with community needs – they currently have plans for a 5.5-acre riverfront park that is to be opening soon, ongoing improvements at the 3-acre canal park including showing movies, and other initiatives.
- There was some lingering concern that the CIMP is looking at land acquisition, which would result in taking lands into federal ownership and off the tax rolls. It was clarified that CIMP is interested in partnerships including long-term leases that would meet the Marine Corps needs without land acquisition. The participants questioned the viability of public private partnership. It was noted there are challenges with the need to provide money up front, but the CIMP intends to seek special legislation and federal funding that could be used to leverage a partnering option.

Antiterrorism/Force Protection (AT/FP) Requirements

- Participants wanted to know if treating areas differently for access by vehicles and pedestrian use was a viable option. An AT/FP representative stated that yes, this was a viable option. Options for this "buffer zone" (area between fenceline preventing vehicles and bollards allowing pedestrian traffic) could include mixed-use facilities; nothing is off the table at this point. The U.S. Department of Transportation facility on M St. is a good example of how standards have been creatively applied; however, those are federal standards which are different than Department of Defense standards.
- It was noted that this was a vague answer and that the community continues to have a problem with this issue and wants to know when they will have some idea of what solutions are possible. AT/FP representative stated that they will be doing a lot of work in the coming weeks to provide more concrete answers.

Square 929/930 and Adjacent Area

- Overall, this site received the most attention during the open house as well as the open forum discussion.
- Pros for this site included:
    - Provides an anchor Capital Riverfront area; transition between the development south of the freeway and Barracks Row
    - Enhanced retail opportunities – on M St. and entrance at 11th and M Sts.

    - The groups liked that this option was brought forward by the community
    - Good quality of open space and planning
    - Design features of the plan were well received and noted
    - Developers have been involved in neighborhood groups and the Capitol Riverfront BID and have incorporated concerns that have been heard into the plan.
- Cons for this site included:
    - This is the least favorite site from one homeowner's perspective. It removes the Capital views he currently has, adds housing which takes away parking, removes the park area, significantly changes parking dynamic and quiet lifestyle of the street.
    - A homeowner from this location stated there would be limited to no support of this site without a buy-out option, particularly for the homes along Potomac Ave.
    - Plan should include Square 952.
    - Removing the Virginia Ave. Garden, one of the only parks remaining in the area. Evolution of the area should take into consideration that there will be a change in the standard of living and a recreation facility should be included. A lot of work has been done to improve the community gardens.
    - In the long-term, there is a plan to transition the Southeast Freeway into a boulevard going through area rather than an elevated thoroughfare. Things that might make sense with the current freeway configuration might not make sense with this long-term plan. If it becomes a reality, it is likely that a 7-story building would have impacts on views in the area.
    - A participant noted that they feel the Marine Corps is not looking at an integrated plan, but different plans from different perspectives. They need to incorporate the planning of the city and Capitol Riverfront BID.
- Potomac Ave. rowhouses could transition to Marine housing (9 houses). The participants questioned the historic nature of these houses. Are they officially designated as historic?
- It was suggested that this site and Exxon 4 scheme could be combined to offer a better solution – buy-out homeowners, move community garden to a more central location, and add commercial on M St. The entrances to streets need more study.
- Closure of L St, 9th, Potomac St
    - Biggest problem would be commuters to Washington Navy Yard from Interstate 295
    - Changes to the 11th St ramps in this area would not be likely change traffic patterns on these streets.
    - The streets are currently a mix of one-ways and do not provide much through access.

- The owners of Blue Castle, Madison Marquette, support the plan. The Blue Castle building could be destination retail and commercial as has been the long-term plan for the facility. It was questioned if they would keep the structure as is. The owner representative stated they were still in planning/design, but that they wish to preserve the historic significance of the structure and used Georgetown Car Barn as an example. They also stated that the structure would not remain blue. They endorse the plan incumbent on the developers to achieve the goals that have been brought up in terms of neighborhood stability and reestablishing economic vitality to the community.
- The National Capital Planning District (NCPC) representative stated that additional coordination with NCPC, National Park Service, and Commission of Fine Arts will be necessary to address their concerns at this location.

Exxon Site, Virginia Ave. Park, and Adjacent Area

- From a resident's perspective, this site has the potential for attracting developers and the design features are favorable (like features at the corner, layout, and preserved retail), but as a homeowner in the area do not like potential for being surrounded by military facilities. This homeowner states this site would not be welcomed without a buy-out option.
- A developer noted the potential for this site to be used in addition to the BEQ for expanding the Navy Yard. They have heard roughly 3,500 personnel are coming to the Navy Yard.
- Some of the pros/cons are similar to the new Square 929/930 proposal.

Marine Barracks Washington Annex

- Options 3 and 4 were overwhelmingly favored by participants over Options 1 and 2.
- Participants questioned whether or not the plan included tearing down the parking garage.
- General question whether parking can go beneath a BEQ. Marine Corps responded that it is not ideal to put parking beneath a BEQ siting due to security concerns.
- Group wants to put parking throughout site if possible.
- One resident stated that they would be opposed to forcing a site – want the Marine Corps to get space they need, but would like to see soccer field preserved.

Square 882

- In the Thursday morning workshop at Eastern Market, Asmara Habate, project manager for the D.C. Housing Authority (DCHA) Square 882 project, stated that Square 882 should be taken off the list of options. A letter from the Executive Director of DCHA that will state DCHA's position on elimination of the site from further consideration for a BEQ is forthcoming.
- The City continues to oppose use of Square 882 for BEQ.

- Some participants noted that they were surprised to see Square 882 is still an option for consideration given the DCHA plan.

Washington Navy Yard

- Participants wanted to know more about historic issues associated with these plans.
- NCPC questioned the necessity of Marine Corps Institute (MCI) being in close proximity to the 8th & I Main Post. It was noted that these Marines of MCI have an active function in the parades and other ceremonial and security functions as part of their mission and, therefore, need to be in close proximity.
- Unclear about priorities of tenants on Washington Navy Yard with more people expected to be working at the Navy Yard by 2013.