

**UIC Master Plan
Community Forum
July 1, 2009
Meeting Summary**

Introductions

C. Barnes-Boyd welcomed those who were present and introduced Warren Chapman. He asked everyone to introduce themselves. The following organizations were represented:

- Bethel New Life, Inc.
- Central States SER – Jobs for Progress, Inc.
- Healthcare Consortium of Illinois
- Holiday Inn Mart Plaza
- Jazz Institute of Chicago
- Koenig & Strey Realty
- Marcy-Newberry Association
- McCormick Chamber of Commerce
- O-H Community Partners
- St. Ignatius College Prep
- UIC
- UNO
- West Central Association
- Westside Health Authority
- Westside Federation

He then introduced Jim Foerster.

Presentation

J. Foerster made a presentation describing the UIC Master Planning process and some of the findings that the consultants included in their Phase I report. The presentation can be found in its entirety at www.uic.edu/master_plan. (Once at the site, click on “Planning Materials” and then on “Community Forums”.)

Discussion

Minority Participation

A question was raised concerning the degree of minority participation in the consulting contracts. J. Foerster responded that Words and Pictures, one of the four firms involved in the project, is an MBE.

Campus Maps

UIC was described as a welcoming campus, but also one that is hard to navigate, especially from the major transit stops. Could there be a downloadable map of the campus with these stations highlighted? What about a searchable map on the UIC website that would allow a person to create a printable route from a CTA train or bus stop to a specific building on campus or, preferably, to a specific department or program? W. Chapman indicated that those sounded like things that were worth looking into.

A person asked if there could be “You are here” type maps placed around campus like those in shopping malls to help visitors. W. Chapman responded that there are 20 such maps strategically located on campus and oriented to where the user is standing.

Another questioner wondered about the possibility of placing automated kiosks on campus where information could be quickly updated. W. Chapman indicated that that would be an expensive option and stated that the UIC website was being reconfigured to enable it to be even more user-friendly, easily updateable and kept current.

The campus was felt to be even vaster than the campus maps would suggest. W. Chapman replied that the combined two sides of campus do indeed result in a rather large urban campus. However, on the West Side of campus, the boundaries between the various member institutions of IMD (Illinois Medical District) are not clear, which can make the UIC portion sometimes appear larger than it actually is.

J. Foerster added that although there are a couple of UIC-owned parcels of property further to the west, for most purposes, Damen is the western edge of the campus.

Retail Stores

The concept of utilizing UIC property for retail purposes, perhaps a “Big Box” store, was raised as a way to both serve the needs of the local neighborhoods and provide employment opportunities for students. J. Foerster replied that he has never favored using campus real estate for “Big Box” stores, partly because these types of stores consume vast amounts of land. He mentioned that the IMD is fairly well along in discussions for the addition of a Costco store along Ashland. This would meet both of the purposes that the questioner had suggested.

In addition, mixed-use developments involving smaller retail establishments (such as what was created on South Campus) are being considered by the consultants. He added that the West Side of campus, in particular, is pretty much devoid of activity after 5 o’clock and could benefit from the addition of some dining establishments and other retail ventures that would stay open into the evening and perhaps even later.

Joint Activity Committee

It was noted that the community has been integrated in many positive ways with the University. This could be further developed if there was an on-going joint University / Community “Activity Committee”. Often, it was stated, members of the community are not aware of what is happening on campus. An activity committee could help fill that communication gap. It could also assist in the creation of joint programs involving on campus and off campus locations for both individuals and organizations.

W. Chapman applauded the concept and mentioned the example of performers on campus in need of audience members and neighborhood musicians and artisans in need of places to show their talents. He pledged to follow-up.

Mid-Block Crossings

It was noted that the stretch along Harrison between Racine and Morgan is very dangerous for the pedestrians who choose to cross this very busy street at numerous mid-block locations, instead of just at the marked crosswalks at the intersections. J. Foerster indicated that that is one of the many “hot spots” that the traffic and parking consultants are looking at and will be making recommendations for improvement.

Sharing Intellectual Property

A participant suggested that UIC would be a great source of brainpower and other resources and that the surrounding communities would be a great source for projects, surveys, drawings, and internships where those resources could be put to good use in partnership with those communities.

Taylor Street Real Estate

A questioner suggested that one way to help bridge the gap between the two sides of campus would be for UIC to purchase and develop locations along Taylor Street. J. Foerster reminded the group that the Master Plan is concentrating on the property that is already part of the campus and is not envisioning the acquisition of any more real estate.

Student Center East

It was mentioned that Student Center East (SCE), with its escalators and various levels, is very confusing to navigate.

Cultural Festival

A Campus Cultural Festival was suggested to bring the various ethnic groups on campus and in the surrounding neighborhoods together to learn more about each other. J. Foerster mentioned that such cross-cultural exchanges are being considered, programmatically as well as visually and graphically.

Energy Efficiency Projects

It was noted that the College of Nursing building is in need of mechanical system upgrades. J. Foerster stated that an HVAC (Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning) project is about to be implemented which would address those problems on the first three floors in that building. It was added that the campus has a commitment to improve its overall carbon footprint and is doing so through a variety of on-going initiatives, including the geothermal well project on the East Side of campus.

Use of Campus Space

Some spaces on campus seem to be more readily available to the community than other spaces. The process to reserve rooms in the Student Services Building is not common knowledge within the community. J. Foerster replied that the process is the same for SSB as it is for space elsewhere on campus, like SCE.

Lighting

A participant indicated that it can be pretty scary on campus at night and that classes can go as late as 9 PM. The route to the train station can be very dark. Increased lighting would seem to be a relatively affordable method to address this problem. J. Foerster agreed and said that is being reviewed by the landscape architects on the consultant team.

Trolley and Forum Parking

A trolley or tram was suggested as a way to connect with the city which would also reduce pollution. This might also be a way to get people to and from the Forum where there is no adjacent parking and no directional signage to the parking structures to the north and south.

UIC-Halsted Station Inaccessibility

It was noted that the lack of an elevator at the UIC-Halsted Blue Line Station makes it inaccessible to persons in wheelchairs. The station is a busy gateway to the East Side of the campus, yet it is not accessible. J. Foerster stated that this has been an issue since at least 1987 and W. Chapman said this has been a problem as long as he has been on campus. J. Foerster added that to add an elevator at this station would require the widening of the platform which, in turn would necessitate the movement of the tracks. It would be a big project to accomplish.

Performing Arts Center

A participant asked if a Performing Arts Center was in the plans. J. Foerster indicated that such a facility has been a desire of the College of the Architecture and Arts for a long time, but that there has never been enough money to adequately build it. The Master Plan may recommend a site should money ever become available.

South Campus

The question was raised as to whether or not the campus deemed the South Campus development a success. Both W. Chapman and J. Foerster said it has been a resounding success.

Commuter Campus

Is UIC still a commuter campus? W. Chapman indicated that there are approximately 3,700 students currently living on the campus. There are thousands more living within 5-15 minutes from one side of campus or the other. He added that with the presence of Columbia, Roosevelt and DePaul students going to classes and, increasingly, living downtown, the South Loop is becoming more and more student-friendly and student-oriented. Including UIC, there are approximately 75,000 students in the area on a daily basis.

Campus Ambience

It was noted that the lack of late night eateries and coffee shops within and around UIC reduces the prototypical ambience of a campus.

Adjournment

C. Barnes-Boyd thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the forum.