

ATTACHMENT C:

ALPINE-BALSAM COMMUNITY & BOARD ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY – JANUARY 2017

Summary of Jan. 18, 2017 Community Workshop

On Jan. 18, 2017 the city hosted a community workshop with over 100 attendees. Participants used hands-on activities to brainstorm and weigh different uses of the site and consider topics such as mix of uses; amounts of affordable housing, green space, retail space, or other uses; and the role and siting for city facilities. In addition to providing the project team with valuable input regarding the community's vision and values, it was an opportunity for community members to listen and learn from each other as they help to create a vision for the site.

The workshop began with an overview of the site and the preliminary guiding principles. Participants were seated at ten tables. Three tables were designated as "low" density programs (FAR 1.5), four tables were designated as "medium" density programs (FAR 2.0), and three tables were designated "high" density programs (FAR 2.5). Each table was supplied with site plan maps and an amount of blocks representing the magnitude of program area (low, medium, and high). The proposed city space was shown in blue, with blocks representing 140,000 SF, retail space was shown in red with blocks representing 24,000 SF, and residential was shown in yellow with blocks representing 154,000 SF. Additionally, each table had uncolored blocks representing additional space that could be assigned for any use the table participants preferred. The quantity of the additional, uncolored blocks varied depending on the density (low, medium, high) that was assigned. The low density scheme had an additional 113,000 SF of unassigned space, medium density had 305,000 SF of unassigned space, and 498,000 SF of unassigned space. Teams used colored dots to designate the type of use preferred for the unassigned buildings and provided post-it notes describing details of the uses. Finally, all new parking is assumed to be below grade.

The purpose of the exercise was to discover -- through the act of placing blocks -- what some of the challenges, tradeoffs and opportunities are on the site. It was underscored at the outset that final density and use determinations will be made quite a bit later based on additional analysis including financial modeling. As the exercise began participants were asked to consider the draft guiding principles and the following questions as they worked on site design concepts:

1. Building relationships to the street–

- How is public and private space defined? Is this different for residential, retail and civic buildings?
- What is the entry experience like?
- How is building base expressed, how is roof expressed?

2. Relationship between buildings and open space–

- What kinds of open space – intimate to large, private to public, and formal to informal?
- How can every space be made purposeful, including spaces in between buildings?
- How does open space integrate with building uses and adjacent areas?
- How do buildings and open space frame views?

3. Streets and alleys–

- Should new streets and alleys be added within the site?
- What are the various streets like? Consider the hierarchy of streets, alleyways and pedestrian walkways.

4. Environmental sustainability–

- How does the site organization relate to solar and wind availability?
- How are drainage patterns and stormwater considered?

5. Building form and massing–

- How are buildings forms developed for human scale (versus monolithic)?
- Do you have any general ideas about materiality?

Outcomes

The model exercise was done twice, so that participants could work at two different densities, with the added benefit that more design options were created. The photographs below give a sense of the type of schemes that were created. The one on the left shows a “low” density scheme, the one in the center shows a “medium” density scheme, and the one on the right shows a “high” density scheme. All teams were suggested ground rules, which included staying below a 55 foot height limit; a number of the teams, however, broke that rule, as shown in the high density scheme below. Teams were also offered the choice of keeping or replacing the Medical Office Pavilion and most of them kept it although quite a few added an additional floor, as is shown in the medium density scheme below. Many of the teams placed green paper on rooftops to indicate a green roof. Some but not all teams showed roadways (at least circulation paths) extending through the site, as is shown in the low density scheme below.



Key Takeaways

Participants provided their feedback on the value of the workshop in an open discussion at the end and in written comment cards. The response was extremely positive, as participants felt that they were invited to participate and that their thoughts were heard by the city as well as by each other. The goal of the meeting was “discovery,” as there is much more work to be done before firm alternatives can be developed and vetted. That said, there were some good high level concepts discovered during the evening, as discussed below.

There was strong confirmation of the mixed use goal and support for replacement of the existing hospital in order to make space for a vital community hub with significant new affordable housing. One participant spoke out about the need to confirm that reuse of the hospital is not feasible; the general opinion, however, was that the hospital has served its purpose and that a tremendous opportunity to build the best place for the community would be lost if the hospital remained. That said, there did seem to be strong support for re-use of the medical pavilion, especially if another floor could be added.

The exercise with the blocks at three different densities put a focus on the tradeoffs around height and open space. The participants were encouraged not to focus on which density is “best” but on how to

create the best scheme at each density. The economic analysis that will be performed in the next phase of work will inform the thinking around density. That said, there was a general level of “comfort” in the room with each of the densities that were studied. One surprise finding was around the issue of building height. Though all participants were told that a maximum height of 55 feet was a “ground rule” for the study, a number of the tables chose to break that rule, and many voiced the opinion that increased height would benefit the community. The benefits of height included increased program area (more housing), increased open space, and increased variability in scale (i.e., if some buildings are higher and some buildings are lower, the result may be a more interesting overall composition).

Each of the schemes prioritized open space, and many of them called for open space on rooftops. Some of the schemes introduced new roadways and some did not; all, however, seemed to support the creation of a walkable pedestrian-oriented place. All schemes supported the idea of limiting parking to below grade facilities.

Future uses were also a focus of the discussion as participants were asked to organize the site with a base level of housing, retail and city uses, and then to add additional blocks that could be designated for any use. The majority of additional uses specified by the community were housing; however county office space and other commercial and community serving uses were also included in the mix. The uses identified included the following:

- Housing
- Senior Housing
- Homeless Services & Transitional Housing
- Penthouses for the 1% (to help fund affordable housing)
- Start Up Business Space
- Hub for Non-Profits
- Boulder County Facilities
- Live Work
- Daycare
- End of Life Facility
- Health & Wellness Center
- Arts and Culture uses, including artist studios
- Bike Facilities
- Yoga & Coffee
- Gondola Terminal
- Goose Creek Waterway

SUMMARY OF JOINT BOARDS WORKSHOP – January 19, 2017

On Jan. 19, 2017 the city hosted a meeting with 13 participants representing several city boards (Planning Board, Transportation Advisory Board, and the Design Advisory Board). The meeting began with an overview of the previous community input, followed by a more in depth presentation of the community workshop from the evening before. Three representative “schemes” from the night before were recreated on the table to give a first-hand sense of the work created, and board members and

commissioners that had participated offered their reflections to the group. This was followed by a presentation reviewing each of the schemes developed to show the range of thinking explored. A key purpose behind this meeting was to gather input that would lead to refinements to the vision and guiding principles. To further that goal, input was collected in three broad discussions aligning with the three initial guiding principles. That input is summarized below:

Create a place with a mix of uses

The goal of creating a mixed-use development has received unanimous support from the community thus far. The participants at the community workshop and the boards echoed this support and worked to explore how the mix of uses should be balanced. All participants agree that economic analysis is needed, and there is strong support for public uses on the site. Discussion included the following:

- Mixed use guidelines should ensure that ground floor uses activate the development, with a goal of achieving 24/7 activity, or close to it, and should include side streets and courts, not just the Broadway frontage.
- When considering the balance of commercial and residential uses, city services and office space are particularly beneficial because they do not induce additional housing.
- Housing should be the highest priority for the site, and housing designated for city employees should be considered.
- Retail uses will be beneficial but will need to be considered carefully to avoid competition with existing retail uses.
- Community serving uses will be beneficial but should not duplicate uses available at the North Boulder community center up the street.
- There were discussions regarding the appropriate balance of city office space at Alpine-Balsam versus at the Civic Area.
- Roadway edges should be adapted to improve experience at Broadway.
- Potential daylighting of Goose Creek could create a successful setting for retail.

Support Affordability and Sustainability

Participants heard about and were supportive of the public prioritizing affordable housing, offering suggestions on how to realize this goal. While there was also strong support for sustainability goals, the issue of affordable housing occupied the majority of the discussion. Key points include the following:

- Zoning changes are needed to encourage development of many modest units.
- Coop housing should be included in addition to rental housing.
- Unbundled parking should be provided for housing and other uses, as this is good for affordability.
- Mixed use helps affordability because it lessens the overall parking requirement.
- Mixed income development seems like a good approach, including “penthouses for the 1%” to help fund the affordable housing.
- Affordable senior housing should be included in the plan.
- Homeless transitional housing should be included in the plan, however there were some questions and concerns about how that would be implemented.
- Roof areas with public accessible greenspace and/or can supplement green space on the ground, and provide additional play areas for families.

- Rooftop greenspace is desirable however there is a tradeoff with PV solar rooftops – both should be provided.

Respect and respond to the site’s physical environment

Challenges and opportunities relating to the existing physical environment highlight one of the key tradeoffs for the Alpine-Balsam project – the tradeoff between height and open space. As issues of flood mitigation, neighborhood connectivity, pedestrian safety and walkability all support development of an open space network, while the goal of vibrancy and mixed use development highlight the need for sufficient density. To fully capture the dynamics of this issue, the project team has created an additional guiding principle: “Create a significant node of activity along the Broadway corridor.” Points of discussion include the following:

- Open space on the site should be developed to support a walkable environment.
- The site should be “permeable” to the adjacent neighborhoods with publically accessible pathway through it.
- Pedestrian pathways should be developed as part of a continuous open space network, with intimate scaled “outdoor rooms” along a walkable path.
- Extension of the existing street grid versus campus style development is preferred.
- Planning controls should be developed to enforce the appropriate character and scale of the open space network.
- Flood mitigation strategies should be developed to improve the local conditions and to model best practices for the larger community.
- As Goose Creek flood management strategies are explored, it will be important to avoid obstacles to walkability.
- If Goose Creek is developed with a crossing under Broadway this could possibly double duty as a pedestrian underpass.
- Broadway crossings are not safe and need to be improved.
- Building heights over 55 feet may be desired to support additional housing; concerns were raised, however, about human scaled development – strong differences of opinion were expressed on this issue.

Process Innovation

Finally, there were comments about process and overarching goals that do not “fit” into the three preliminary guiding principles. Those issues, and further discussion as a team, had led the creation of a fifth guiding principle: “Engage process innovations in project planning, design and delivery.” The comments received focus on the benefits to be gained from a proactive and aspirational approach to the project, including the following:

- Design excellence is a key to success and needs to be built into the process.
- Multiple “hands” in design tend to create a better result.
- Design competitions should be explored as a strategy to increase design quality.
- Consider designating the site as a TOD (transit oriented development) to reinforce the benefits of increased density at the Alpine-Balsam location.
- Push sustainable development goals and work to Integrate and build on the findings from the EcoDistrict workshop.

- Test ideas that push the boundaries on height and density to better understand what will create preferred outcomes.
- Consider creating a new land use category for the site.

Conclusion

The input received was extremely beneficial and underscores the value of community engagement and an open collaborative approach to planning and design. Based on the input received and dialogue as a team, the initial set of three building principles has been expanded to five, and refinements have been made to the supporting actions identified under each. We commend the city council on its recommendation to engage a more robust and open planning process.