

Staff Meeting Notes: June 6, 2011 CDAC Meeting

Committee members present:

Kurt Schmoke, chair	Rhonda Pindell-Charles
Gene Godley, vice-chair	Orlando Ridout
Karen Theimer Brown	Joseph Rubino
Anthony Clarke	Gary Schwerzler
Dick D’Amato	Peggy Summers
Catherine Durkan	Robert Waldman
Debbie Gosselin	Chance Walgran
Kitty Higgins	Carol Nethen West
Ann Jensen	
Gary Jobson	

City Staff present:

Jon Arason	Lisa Grieco
Sally Nash	Lily Openshaw
Flip Walters	

7 members of the public were in attendance.

The meeting began at 6:38.

- I. The chair explained the schedule for the meeting
- II. The review of the draft report section “Introduction and Vision” was postponed and the Committee began a discussion on Memorial Circle
- III. Memorial Circle Discussion
The Committee discussed potential design options for Memorial Circle, especially the three options presented in the traffic circulation study. Some Committee members felt a T-intersection could help create more physical space for pedestrians and for Hopkins Plaza. A pedestrian-only phase on the light could also make it safer for pedestrians to cross the street. There was concern about the possible impacts of a traffic light, however, especially esthetically and in terms of how it could affect traffic congestion.

Many Committee members see the main problem with the current configuration of Memorial Circle is that it is hard for pedestrians to see how to get across it and to the water. A modified circle could provide better and safer pedestrian access, although the trade-off could be traffic flow. A modified circle would also create more space for Hopkins Plaza, and the idea of keeping the circle but changing its configuration had support from many Committee members.

The Committee feels the trade-offs for any design change would need to be carefully considered—especially the balance between pedestrian safety and ease

of crossing balanced with impact to traffic conditions and flow. It would also be extremely important to consider the viewshed and how any potential improvements might affect that.

IV. Design Areas Discussion

The Committee discussed the four design areas from the draft report.

Dock Street to Susan Campbell Park

Committee members stated that there should be an emphasis on the long-term nature of this plan. However, there was interest in identifying smaller aspects of the plan that could be implemented fairly quickly. There can be some small changes made now that would not cost lots of money. For example, many members suggested improving signage both internally to City Dock and for cars approaching downtown.

One unique aspect of the City Dock is how its use changes greatly depending on the season. Some Committee members wanted to make sure that future design plans were able to incorporate this seasonality into any plan. This can affect parking, and is a reason that parking should be priced in a flexible way—it can be priced higher during the peak season and lower in winter.

For the City Dock area, and generally in the plan, some Committee members wanted to stress the importance of creating a destination that people will want to come to. If the destination is compelling enough, parking details will not be as important. Landscaping and public art could be part of this destination-making.

The Committee discussed some key wording that should be emphasized throughout the vision and goals for this plan: “tinkering,” “incremental,” and “experimental.”

Donner Lot

The Committee discussed some potential ideas for this parking lot, such as using it as the place to create more water by digging out and eliminating the parking lot. There was also a discussion of the relationship between this parking lot and the neighboring property at 110 Compromise Street.

There was consensus among the Committee that when the building at this property (110 Compromise) needs to be rebuilt, it should be done so in a way to restore the viewshed from Main Street. Furthermore, the committee expressed a view that whatever is developed at the 110 Compromise Street side should be consistent with the Principles and Goals on which the committee reached consensus. In the long-term, the City should consider acquiring the property in order to have an integrated section of land along the water.

Compromise Corridor

As mentioned above, the Committee thought it very important for this corridor to be integrated and to generally serve the community. The Community Services Building, for example, should be put to public use, many members stated.

Hopkins Plaza/Market House

Much of the discussion on this design area focused on the parking that is north of the Market House and the impact of eliminating it and creating a plaza with outdoor seating. Lily Openshaw, from the Department of Public Works, described the geothermal project that will be under construction on January and explained that this could be a good time to implement some of the changes that the Committee is considering.

V. Review of draft report section “Principles and Goals”

The Committee discussed this draft report section and wanted to emphasize the importance of incremental, flexible, and experimental projects and different ways to involve the community in the implementation of this plan. There was also a discussion of the importance of making sure “business” was an important part of the plan—meaning that the needs of local merchants downtown should be an important part of the plan. One way to support businesses and improve traffic flow could be to implement better and more creative signage that would do a better job of directing people to different parking options, priced according to distance to City Dock and the season. There was also interest in adding more discussion on changes that could occur on the water-side of City Dock, such as floating docks.

For the next meeting, Planning and Zoning will work up some ideas for implementation and potential timelines. The Committee will also discuss the vision section at the next meeting.

The next CDAC meeting will be on June 20, 2011. The Committee will be meeting at the Pip Moyer Recreation Center at Truxtun Park at 7:00 pm.

The Committee’s initial report to City Council on goals and principles is tentatively scheduled for July 21 at 2:30.

The meeting ended at 9:15.