

Reinventing the Crescent

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Downriver Neighborhood Meeting

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Holy Angels Convent

Carol Bebelle explained that this is an opportunity for the team to hear from the “proximate” communities. She said that architects like to imagine how things can be and make it look as real as possible. As these designs have taken a physical shape, it is time to listen to the dreams and fears of the community.

Allen presented the organizing principles and talked about the “hybrid” solution – creating different landscapes in different areas, in some places with architecture and in others by allowing the river to reclaim the area.

He talked about the primary nodes or “major moments.”

- 1 – Jackson Avenue – carve away platform to create a green edge
- 2 – Riversphere/Convention Center – Neighborhood uses along with academic village and residential towers
- 3 – Julia Street – 900-room hotel already planned
- 4 – Spanish Plaza – Create something appropriate as the terminus to Canal Street
- 5 – Jackson Square – Expand the plaza to rivers’ edge
- 6 – Elysian Fields/Esplanade – Notch out a place in the working wharves
- 7 – Piety Street – neighborhood use
- 8 – Press Street -- neighborhood use, NOCCA expansion
- 8 – Poland Avenue – Residential opportunity with recreational uses.

Question:

What about the 5000 residential units referred to earlier?

Response:

The total will not be anywhere near that number. The development opportunities are hotel, residential and institutional.

Question (Nathan Chapman):

Why not leave Gov. Nicholls and Esplanade wharves and use Mandeville wharf as park area?

Response:

The terminus of Elysian Fields and Esplanade is inappropriate. It is not gracious. A notch between the wharves would recognize the importance of the location. It will not be a major park, but rather a place for reflection.

Marigny will get new cuts in the floodwall. The neighborhood will decide where they should be. They will likely be figured out in conjunction with the openings for the streetcar line when it is extended.

Gene Cizek:

He doesn’t mind a building at Elysian Fields/Esplanade but wants the height limit of 50 feet to be honored. Traffic is already bad on Chartres and Poland is not made for trucks. It is more density than the people want.

Response:

The team recognizes the difficulties and is modeling with different heights.

Question:

What/who is the New Orleans Building Corporation?

Response:

It is a city agency that acts as a landlord for city property.

Ms. Harrison:

So much green space takes away from walkability. Even though it is supposed to be a gathering place, there are other places to gather, i.e. bars and restaurants. The proposed plan tears up the fabric of the neighborhood. When you talk about walking out on a pier to the water, is it doable in August in New Orleans? Will there be shops and restaurants along the pier to draw people inside? Perhaps it should be looked at as a small tight urban landscape instead of suburban. Where is the Corps of Engineers in all of this?

Response:

The team is working with the Corps. The team doesn't see it as suburban. The plan is to reinforce the urban grid and drop in green space where it is appropriate. In the 4.5 miles there will be a lot of different experiences.

Question:

What about bicycle paths?

Response:

The team is looking at it for universal accessibility. The bigger issue is the Railroad.

Question:

What about zoning as it relates to truck routes?

Response:

Traffic is a huge risk factor and the team will speak to the impact of the cruise terminal with the port. The cruise ship terminal was a "given" when the contract was awarded. There may be alternatives.

Belinda Little-Wood:

Poland Avenue has been surplus by the Navy. The Port thought it could put in a parking garage, but there is a process that has to be followed. The site has to first be offered to homeless service providers, then public conveyance. The highest and best use of the property will be determined, but it can't be developed until Federal City is done in 2009 or 2010. There will be many opportunities for community input.

Question:

What is the timeline for the project?

Response:

The work will be complete by June 30. The city has some money to "trigger" development. Where to spend it is the consideration. The plan will have "actionable" items.

Question:

The stepped area for Jackson Square could be an issue as it was in San Francisco for homeless issues.

Nathan Chapman:

I like the rip-rap at the levee.

Gene Cizek:

There is lots of room to build in the Marigny, but it needs to be done by the community's rules. He is tired of outside experts.

Question:

Chartres Street has already undergone an upgrade. She would like to know what "They" are planning for the terminal at Poland.

Response:

The reality is that the market will determine most of the development. He said the team wants to build in the historic context and scale.

Comments:

Housing would be better at Poland Avenue. A hotel would be bad because it is a traffic generator. The buildings at Poland could be adapted and used as condos.

Question:

Is a sculpture garden the plan for Piety?

Response:

The programming has not been determined, but at this point anything is possible. These are big visions.