

Campus Plan Task Force Meeting Notes  
Wednesday, October 13, 2010  
7:00-9:00 pm  
Mary Graydon Center, Rooms 5&6  
American University

**Meeting Agenda**

Welcome and Introductions

David Taylor  
*Office of the President, American University*

Don Edwards,  
*Justice and Sustainability Associates, LLC*

Housing and Residence Life Presentation

Gail Hansen  
*VP Campus Life, American University*

Two-Step Zoning Process

Jorge Abud  
*Facilities, Development and Real Estate,  
American University*

Other Sites Review

Ron Kessler  
*McKissack & McKissack*

Other Business

Don Edwards  
*Justice and Sustainability Associates, LLC*

David Taylor opened the meeting and led introductions.

Don Edwards apologized for the late distribution of the September 28 meeting notes. Don added that the meeting notes were distributed via e mail for review. The intention had been to get them out earlier than today. Meeting notes and information from tonight's meeting will be posted on AU's Community Relations Web page [www.american.edu/finance/fas/campus-plan.cfm](http://www.american.edu/finance/fas/campus-plan.cfm).

Gail Hansen, VP Campus Life, presented information about the university's residential housing program that is handled though AU's Housing and Dining office. She reviewed residential housing locations on campus and underscored AU's goal to make them safe, secure, well-maintained and beautifully landscaped.

The university views its residential housing as not just a place to live, but to live and learn. Our residence halls are created as learning centers, are intentionally designed and staffed for support, she said.

Dr. Hansen described several residential living/learning communities that exist in our residential halls, including a residential hall with honors students and staff, as examples of the ways that academics contribute

to residential undergraduate life. In addition, there are several faculty-in-residence programs. As one example, she cited John Richardson who has lived in Anderson Hall for 10 years and has his own blog called [dormgrandpop.com](http://dormgrandpop.com). Another professor, Joseph Campbell, in the School of Communications, has his office in McDowell Hall. Associate Professor Wendell Cochran and his wife Fay live in Nebraska Hall. Don Brenner, a lawyer/professor of real estate law is in Leonard.

Dr. Hansen also described the residence hall associations in all campus housing.

“We try to create community in a number of ways,” in our residence halls, she said. Hughes Hall has honors students and staff offices. First year students live in residence halls with double rooms and shared baths. The first year students are clustered on the South side of the campus, and their hall staff is focused on the student transition from high school to college. In their second year on campus, many students move to residential clusters around a topic. Also in the second year, they start thinking about study-abroad programs and internships around the city. About 60% of AU students will study abroad for a semester or a year. Upperclassmen usually live in residential halls including Nebraska Hall, Centennial on the North side of campus.

Plans for the proposed new East Campus would likely include offering housing to juniors, some sophomores, and seniors who want to be on campus.

Dr. Hansen talked about the university’s “clear expectations” for students living on campus. Resident students sign a lease agreement. Priorities for residential halls include study, sleep and community development. Disorderly conduct is not acceptable. Students attend orientations, and floor meetings are mandatory. Every residential cluster has mature, trained, experienced professionals who are on call. There is one in each cluster on call 24 hours a day. Upper-class students are trained to work as RA’s. There is at least one RA on each floor. There is an RA on duty 24 hours a day and a 24 hour desk staffed by students that functions as a hub for the residential hall.

AU has about 3,800 undergraduate students living across campus. The RA is backed up by the resident director who is backed up by the assistant director. “We have a small army,” Dr. Hansen said, adding that all of them are well-schooled on how to manage emergencies. “They do a superior job,” she added.

Turning to the proposed East Campus, she said that Public Safety will regularly patrol the East Campus. There are plans for resident directors, as well as assistant directors who will live there, RA’s who will be on every floor, as well as a 24-hour desk. The proposed plans include two resident faculty apartments.

Regarding the movement of students, she said all entrances to the new residence hall will be oriented to an interior quad. Faculty and staff housing will be on the first floors. No students will live on the first floor of residential halls on the East Campus. This complex is oriented to the main campus for student life from fitness to food, she said.

A question was asked about what the university is doing about complaints of students walking along Massachusetts and Nebraska Avenues. Dr. Hansen, who is also a neighbor, said a contributing issue to this situation is the lack of residential housing on campus. “We have had to spread students out in the community. We would like to have them back rather than scattered about,” she said, adding that the foot

traffic from students living in AU rented apartments in the Berkshire will decrease a lot with new housing on the East Campus. She also noted that the university has created a new group of representatives from across the campus to address with off-campus issues.

A neighbor asked about potential eating facilities for the new East Campus. Jorge Abud said the university would like to have several small retail eating places (5,000 sq. ft.). The university is seeking input from neighbors about what type of retail the community would like to have. Gail Hansen added that each floor of the new residence halls will have a full kitchen on every floor for students to use.

Don Edwards asked if AU could provide the community with a list of what potential retail might include so they have a more precise sense of what to expect and put that on the Community Relations web page. The university will do that.

A community member asked where the entrance for service vehicles would be located. Jorge Abud said the most likely location is off New Mexico Avenue at the rear of the parcel..

A question was asked about plans for the building to be located at Nebraska and New Mexico Avenues. The university said it will be a 40,000 sq. ft. administrative building with office space that that could house a new welcome center for admissions and alumni.

A neighbor asked why buildings used at night were next to residential areas. Gail Hansen described the planned buffer – up to 120 feet in places – between the Westover community and the closest residence hall, and added that the design for living space in this building means that there will be a lower number of students living in that building.

Another neighbor asked what is happening to fill the former Balducci's space. Jorge Abud said the university has been trying to find a model retailer similar to Balducci's, but that has been unsuccessful as yet. While this search continues, the university is also looking at smaller eateries, such as a gourmet Thai food (eat in and take out) and a sandwich/salad shop. He said the university has several firm prospects.

Don Edwards asked the university if it would be possible to describe a best case scenario for retail here that fits the community, and also to eliminate other options such as fast food that would be less palatable. The university agreed to do so (???)

One neighbor suggested that AU move its library there for the community to use. Gail Hansen invited neighbors to visit the Bender Library for a better understanding of how materials are migrating out of university libraries as a result of new technology. She noted that a big building full of books isn't the future on campuses.

Moving to the next item on the agenda, Jorge Abud reviewed the city's two-step zoning process. This will include a new Campus Plan and Further Processing, also called "Second Stage Review" that includes more detailed designs for a specIn the proposed Campus Plan, the university plans to file for Further Processing for Nebraska Hall and the East Campus.

Abud said the university is hoping to file its Campus Plan in mid-December and will provide the community with a draft 30 days before the filing.

Next on the agenda, Ron Kessler, with the architectural firm of McKissack & McKissack, reviewed the overall proposal for the new Campus Plan as well as 10 specific sites to give the task force “some sense of what you will see when this plan is complete.”

Clark site: Today, this is a complex of four two-story buildings adjacent the seven-story Letts Hall. In the new Campus Plan, these four smaller buildings would be replaced by two five/six story buildings. There would be an additional height for the mechanical penthouse on top of the building of about 18 feet, six inches.

A neighbor commented, “how would you like to live across the street from a five-story building?”

Another neighbor asked that commuter simulations of new buildings be done without trees.

Another neighbor expressed concern for the loss of existing trees that might happen as part of the construction of new buildings.

Public Safety site: Several smaller buildings would be replaced with three new residence halls that would be four stories, and drop off with the slope of the land to a potential of five or six stories. A neighbor on Rockwood Parkway expressed concern about how visible these new buildings would be to adjacent neighbors. AU owns four houses along Rockwood Parkway. Another task force member said “you are stepping on your own property values,” with these new buildings and asked where other private properties are in relation to these AU-owned properties.

Another neighbor asked if a study had been done on how much brighter the neighborhood might be as a result of residence hall lights.

Nebraska Hall: The addition to the East of the existing Nebraska Hall building will be 56,000 sq. ft., and match all the floors and roof sites. There are three floors in the current Nebraska Hall. In response to a question, Gail Hanson said there will be more RA’s when the new addition is added. The university owns one house nearby.

Beeghly site: Currently this is a five story science building that drops to six stories on the athletic field side. This site drops off dramatically. An addition of 60,000 sq. ft. is planned for to improve aging science facilities.

A neighbor urged AU to increase its landscaping to decrease its visibility of the school, Bender arena and the soccer field to neighbors.

Don Edwards said of the presentation, “this has been a pretty big piece of pie to digest,” and that there may be a desire to revisit this in future discussions.

Jorge Abud reiterated that the university’s goal is to combine the Campus Plan proposal with Further Processing for just two sites: East Campus and Nebraska Hall.

A community member asked how much detail AU will provide in its plan on Tenley. Jorge Abud said the university plans to provide about as much detail as we have done for the South side of campus.

AU was also asked to provide a map with all of the houses near and around the campus that AU owns marked in a different color.

Another community member asked whether AU had looked at prioritizing its building plans (for the South side) while the Army Corps is still in the neighborhood. Jorge Abud said the Army had done remediation in this area. There is debris under the Public Safety building and the Army Corp will need to address that. In the meantime, it does not propose a risk, he said, adding that the university has done its own internal assessment.

On the filing for the Campus Plan with the Zoning Commission, Jorge Abud said that there is usually a three to four month lag between the time the plan is filed and the time that a hearing is scheduled. Based on an anticipated December filing date, AU expects that a hearing might begin in March and that there would be a minimum of three hearings, possibly a month apart.

AU was asked what the timetable might be for occupying Nebraska Hall and East Campus. Jorge Abud anticipated occupying Nebraska Hall in fall 2013 and East Campus in fall 2014.

Looking ahead to the next meeting date on Oct. 26, and possible topics, Jorge Abud suggested that the agenda include an update on transportation as the university would like to come back and address that along with getting more feedback on plans we've already presented.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, October 26 at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.