

University of Colorado Design Review Board Amended Special Meeting Notes

Date: Monday, November 13, 2023
Time: 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
Location: Via Zoom

DRB and Campus Members present:

Mike Winters, Jody Beck, Sarah Brown, Tom Hootman, Laurel Raines, Chris Shears, and Cary Weatherford, interim campus DRB member for the University of Colorado Denver campus (“CU Denver”).

Others in attendance not otherwise noted:

Kori Donaldson, AVP for Budget, Planning, and Capital and ex officio member of the DRB
Linda Money, CU Real Estate Services, CU System employee / DRB notetaker
Emily Parker, Sr. Budget, Planning, and Policy Analyst, Office of the VP for Budget & Finance

Mike Winters, Chair, determined a quorum and called the meeting of the Design Review Board to order at 12:00 p.m.

12:00 – 12:15 p.m. Study Session – Board Only

The DRB reviewed the item on the agenda prior to convening the public portion of the meeting.

12:15 – 1:30 p.m. Draft Auraria Higher Education Center (“AHEC”) Master Plan – CU Denver Preliminary Review (Information/Direction)

Architect:

Sasaki Associates Inc.

CU Denver Campus Presenters:

Cary Weatherford, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Facilities Management and Planning

Carl Meese, AICP, Deputy Chief of Planning and Sustainability, AHEC

Others Present:

Robin Becker, AHEC Planning Department

Description:

Discussion of the draft AHEC master plan with the DRB, CU Denver, and AHEC.

A/E Presentation

Staff representatives discussed a draft master plan, a copy of which is available upon request through the contact information noted at the bottom of this document.

DRB Comments

The discussion and comments centered around five key questions posed by the staff representatives.

#1 How can a linkage between the park in front of the DCPA and open space in front of St. Elizabeth's Church be made successful?

- Determine how the campus can relate to the parcel on the other side of Speer Blvd. Why will people want to connect between these two spaces?
- An open space destination makes more sense than an open space connection.
- The open space in both parcels may be further developed.
 - Realigning Speer Blvd. will open up developable parcels.
 - These parcels, and the activity associated with the development, are an opportunity to connect the campus to downtown.
 - This isn't a landscape solution, it's a building solution.
- Identify as many opportunities as possible to create connections across Speer Blvd. so it is not a barrier to pedestrian crossings.
- Adding buildings along both sides of Speer Blvd. helps Speer become just another street within the city system, rather than being such a barrier as it is right now.

#2 What qualities of the three development concepts would the DRB advocate be included in the final development scenario?

- The DRB prefers the more urban solutions.
 - It won't be possible to phase a major landscape intervention.
 - A landscape intervention would compromise the developability of some parcels.
 - Explore alternatives that maintain a grid and ways to integrate more open space.
- There isn't enough information included in the master plan to determine whether you will be able to successfully couple residential and academic buildings (or blocks) because the need for academic buildings isn't explored. While the need for housing is understood, it isn't supported by the master plan.
- In order to make this a useful document in five years, it is important to define academic requirements and demographics.
- The current study is a feasibility study; it's not necessarily a design study.
 - What's being studied could be years away and may not happen because of the cost.
 - Consider a study of short-term and long-term development needs.
 - This is the time to look at future opportunities.

#3 How should the 5280 Trail connect to the campus open space network?

- The draft master plan needs to be updated to show the existing 5280 Trail alignment.
- The DRB agreed that it makes sense for the trail to enter on 9th Street and exit on 11th Street, as currently planned and as shown in the diagrams presented.
 - At a minimum, the trail should touch the edges of the campus.
- Consider the alignment of the 5280 Trail to the adjacent Ball Arena Redevelopment. The new development assumes that the trail connects at 11th Street.
- Consider the pedestrian connection to the Ball Arena Redevelopment. The bridge to River Mile is planned for 9th Street (vs. 10th, the current connection shown in the master plan).

#4 How should the campus connect to downtown?

- Short-term steps might include focusing on the connections at Lawrence and Larimer Streets now and plan for a connection at the DCPA in the future when and if the outbound lanes of Speer Blvd. are consolidated.
- Add diagrams of multi-modal transit routes.
- The crossing over Speer Blvd. shown in the conceptual design is better accessed from 11th Street.
 - If you want to get to campus from lower Downtown, you'll want to do it from 11th Street which is adjacent to the park in front of the Tivoli.

#5 What is the preferred mix and locations of academic and mixed used development? Should the future campus include a pedestrian core?

- Rather than design the open space in a linear fashion through campus (a “green street”), consider capturing open spaces that are more defined and purposeful.
- Develop an overlay of softscape v. hardscape areas on campus.
 - There is more existing green on campus than what is shown in the diagrams.
 - Reuse as much of the existing landscaping as possible.
- Could the master plan suggest consolidating lanes on Auraria Parkway and creating a landscaped edge to the campus (similar to the landscaped edge along Speer)?
- Study interventions to activate the campus 24/7. This will create vibrancy and a complete community.
- In order for a retail edge around the interior academic core to be viable, it will be important to provide vehicular access. The shared streets are also slowed streets.
 - If this quality of vehicular traffic could be introduced, it would be a good thing. Access by vehicles shouldn't be eliminated altogether.
 - Is there a desire to attract people outside the AHEC community to retail services?
 - Attracting more people to campus is positive exposure for all three institutions.

- The master plan needs to consider how the proposed development and campus accessibility can contribute to the long-term health of the three institutions.
- Study the precedents in the master plan to determine how they may influence what happens with the campus going forward.
 - If implementation of the current 2017 master plan is continued, development of 4- to 6-story buildings on the campus will continue, and developable parcels will likely be gone within the next 15 to 20 years, creating an academic focused campus with an activation period not much different than it is now.
- Study campus housing demand.
- Continue to study vehicle circulation and parking.
 - Does the vehicular circulation proposal create a more predictable pattern of automobile circulation? Does it promote a pedestrian core?
 - Include cross sections of the roadways.
 - What is the parking master plan? How many spaces will be needed in the future?
 - Avoid adding parking at the ground level in new buildings. Preserve opportunities for ground-level activation.
 - When walking around the campus now, it's nice that there aren't through-streets and cars.
- Update the mobility infrastructure diagram on page 30 to:
 - Continue the yellow arrows on 9th Street as it crosses over to River Mile.
 - Delete the arrow on 11th Street.
 - Extend the arrow on Lawrence Street to Speer Blvd. and then all the way southwest.

General Comments

- Explore ways to integrate phasing into the master plan.

DRB Action

No formal action was required for this matter. The DRB provided the comments and direction noted above.

There being no further business, the public meeting of the DRB was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

(For assistance with the attachments referenced within this document, please contact Linda Money at (303) 860-6110 or linda.money@cu.edu.)