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Engaging the Community in the East Campus Redevelopment

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This document summarizes preliminary ideas for engaging the community in the East Campus Redevelopment Initiative generated by Rethink College Park. It also contains the results of a preliminary survey of best practices of peer institutions in the area of community involvement for campus planning and construction projects.

Philosophy

- **Consensus-based** approach to include community input in project design in an early and meaningful way
- **Proactive**, not reactive approach: hold conversation before proposals are finalized, reach out to constituent groups on campus and in the community
- **Candid** and up-front about what is open for discussion: university's requirements for housing, office, etc, developer's financial requirements
- **Transparency** is key

Recommendations

- I. Community education to prepare for input process
 - a. Use local media outlets and other means to educate the public about the project well in advance of public events
 - b. Utilize a concise and clear message of the project's scope, purpose, and scale
 - c. Maintain a consistent message for all stakeholder groups
- II. Cultivating focused engagement over the entire project life cycle
 - a. Identify a community advisory committee group of "parties of record," to be notified of events and solicited for electronic feedback over the phased duration of the project
 - b. This advisory committee could function as focus group in the design process as needed
 - c. Proactively engage multiple community groups
 - i. Faculty, staff, and students, especially from relevant fields: architecture, planning, landscape architecture, real estate, etc.
 - ii. Local citizen associations and other community groups from surrounding municipalities
 - iii. Fraternities and sororities (especially about construction impacts)

- iv. Others
- III. Engaging the public and students more broadly
 - a. Multiple, early, well advertised public meetings to solicit input, explain decisions
 - b. Electronic mechanism for the public to submit thoughts, archive all comments online anonymously for the public to see
 - c. Community survey
 - d. Community newsletter through mailing list on status of project
 - IV. Developer Initiatives
 - a. Identify community liaison to serve as point of contact for questions, distribute information
 - b. Web presence with timely information about project status, meeting agendas and schedules, electronic documents
 - c. Publish booklet with plans once final decisions are made to distribute in the community
 - d. Post signs on site to alert public, with URL and phone number

Best Practices Review

Findings

Involving the community for significant campus growth and creating detailed websites for community education is normal at UMD's peer institutions. Involving students through committees or public meetings is routinely done for projects impacting them directly, such as residence halls and athletic facilities.

The University of Maryland has the opportunity to be a national leader in the area of community engagement to create an outstanding addition to our campus and the College Park area.

Peer Institution Research

- At the **University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill**, the process to create a plan for a large "Carolina North" campus expansion includes an Advisory Committee. Although the committee has no student members the committee holds public meetings, has a detailed website which even includes video of public meetings. I found some complaints on a local politics blog about the lack of transparency, however much information is available.
- The **University of California - Berkeley** has held community meetings to develop their master plan, maintains a detailed website with lists of upcoming community meetings and information on planned projects. The campus is also a national leader in sustainability and their advisory committee on the topic includes 6 students and 1 alumni, out of 18 total members.
- The **University of Chicago's** campus planning department maintains a detailed website with all information presented at community workshops, a "contact us" form for written comments, and also maintains a mailing list.
- At **Hendrix College** the process in constructing a New Urbanist expansion to their campus has included a detailed website and community charrette.

- A state law that was proposed in Texas would require involvement in campus construction in that state by architecture students. An article reporting on the bill reported that **Texas A&M**, **Harvard**, and **Rice University** already consult with architecture students on on-campus projects. **University of Texas - Austin** has created committees to solicit input on projects designed for student use like the recreational sports center.
- At **University of California – Los Angeles**, it was reported student input was “crucial part of the planning stages” for a dorm that opened in 2000.
- The **University of Michigan** gathered “considerable input” from students in the design of a large academic building and resident hall called North Quad, and reported they would be asked “for comment periodically” as the project moves forward.