

Edgewater Drive Vision Task Force
Meeting Minutes, March 6, 2008

A meeting of the Edgewater Drive Vision Task Force was held on Thursday, March 6, 2008 at approximately 3:30 p.m. at Orlando City Hall, 400 S Orange Avenue, in Conference Room "R".

Task Force Members Present

Chair Claramargaret Groover
Karen Schimpf
Robert Ward
Robert Carr, Jr.
Eric Apen
Mary Dees
Greg Bryla

Task Force Members Absent

Tom Cook
Phyllis Tuell
Eric Shawn Houston

Others Present

Jason Burton, Chief Planner, City of Orlando
F.J. Flynn, Transportation Planning Division Manager, City of Orlando
Jon Ippel, Planner, City of Orlando
Michelle Pierrette, Planner, City of Orlando
Natalie Barnes, Resource Analyst, City of Orlando
Malisa McCreedy, Transportation Planner, City of Orlando
Commissioner Robert Stuart

Stakeholder Interview Edgewater High School Presentation
Speaker - Rob Anderson, Edgewater High School Principal

Shrinking student population. 4 years prior, there were about 3,200 students assigned to Edgewater High School. Currently, there are approximately 2,200 students; the 1,000 student drop is a result of transfer possibilities offered by OCPS. The new High School will be built to accommodate a capacity of approximately 2,400-2,450 students.

Academics. The school was recently named #321 in a ranking of top United States High Schools. There has been an increase of Advanced Placement

exams to 1,200 from 400. The school has been an Engineering/Science/Tech magnet since 1991; there has been national recognition of the program.

Campus Renovation. The redevelopment of the High School has been an interesting process. OCPS has been negotiating with Demetree Builders on the purchase of new property, and there has been continual change in the site plans. There have been options for vehicular access to both Edgewater Drive and Maury Road. Safety and Traffic Flow are top priorities for the principal in the site plan. The current site has no real pick-up and drop-off areas, and results in parents dropping students across the street. Extra security must be in place to deal with the “open” campus in order to keep the kids on the campus. The most complaints from the neighborhood the principal receives are students out in the area when they are supposed to be in class. There are needs for future cross walks to compliment the redevelopment of the campus.

The overall goal of the renovation should be that of a secure but inclusive campus. Part of this can be accomplished by Joint Use facilities (such as a YMCA). Usually have to limit these types of facilities to athletic facilities. There is a possibility that some district offices could be moved to the campus.

Task Force members asked about OCPS’s ability to consider the needs of the school in the design process – CT Hsu (local architect) has been involved in the campus architecture and planning for several years (worked on the media center and administrative buildings), and the campus has been a custom design brought forward with a collaborative effort.

Transportation issues of the High School were discussed. It was asked if there are any carpooling incentives that could be included in the planning of the high school? (Answer was that it could be staff intensive to enforce). The school is served by 27-28 school buses. There is an increase in the amount of parking in the new campus scheme; there are 600 spots now, there would be 800 in the future. Students have to remain in good standing in order to be able to drive to the school.

Task Force members discussed the benefits of the school fronting Edgewater Drive. According to the Castaldi analysis of buildings, certain buildings fronting Edgewater Drive would need to be retained. There is a possibility of having a separate Ninth Grade Center on the southern part of the campus where certain buildings are required to be maintained. This will allow for the transition to High School to be easier for that particular population; however, there has to be an analysis that it may be difficult for those students to get around to other elective classes on the campus within the time allotted between periods.

Task Force Comments on High School. Task Force members had a discussion of the general treatment along Edgewater Drive of the new Campus Plan. There is a general consensus to save the oak trees that currently exist

along Edgewater Drive. While there is the potential to have landscaping and security fencing along Edgewater Drive and other perimeters in the future, building design should incorporate as much transparency (windows) on walls adjacent to the street.

Old Business – Urban Form Proposal

Transect Proposal. Mr. Burton explained the impacts of the transect proposal as compared to the existing zoning along Edgewater Drive. The proposal includes a significant amount of “step-down” into the existing single family residential neighborhoods to the west – staff needs to know how comfortable the Task Force is with that vision, as the transect can be pulled back to create more abrupt transition. Additionally, the transition could be restricted to residential uses to the west where they impact neighborhoods. Bob Carr, Jr. explained that several citizens in the community would be uncomfortable with infiltrating into the existing residential neighborhoods to the west; there is also an element of residents in College Parking that would oppose any kind of development in the area. Chair Groover offered that we should look at the problem creatively, and modify the proposal, and asked that Mr. Jim Kersey (Real Estate Collaborative, LLC), from the audience, share some perspective of an Edgewater Drive commercial developer.

Mr. Kersey offered an opinion on the possibility of creating the transition within existing AC-1 zoned properties, and providing access alleyways to create a better transition into the existing neighborhoods

Staff agreed to re-draft the transect proposal, with special consideration on the transition to the western neighborhoods.

Transportation and Parking Issues.

Vassar/Edgewater Intersection Light. Staff detailed options for improvements to the intersection. Re-timing of the signal has occurred over the last several months. The Vassar signal at Edgewater has several phases due to the unique geometry in the area, which cuts down on the capacity of the “offset” intersection to handle traffic. The signal is timed uniquely for AM, Mid-day, School Dismissal, PM and Off-peak periods. Re-timing of signals can produce limited results, unless turning restrictions can be introduced.

Commissioner Stuart announced a separate meeting at Noon on March 21st in the second floor conference room of Washington Mutual, 2424 Edgewater Drive, to brainstorm solutions to the affected intersections. One of the problems with the timing of the signal is that it is based on demand and not “cycle” timed during certain periods. With the increase of “calls” from Vassar Street, the more traffic on Edgewater gets stopped; a solution is to change to cycle times, or install turning restrictions with stop signs (and thereby taking out the signal).

Edgewater Median/ Alley-way Options. Planning staff presented several median opening options, in order to create the turning restrictions needed and to create additional landscaping amenities in the medians. The median system is an item originally brought forward in the original Horizons 2000 plan for College Park.

Staff explained that coupled with an alley system, the medians create a system of access where traffic can operate to get to its destination, but dissuades “cut-through” traffic. Turning restrictions introduced by the median system forces existing traffic to signalized intersections; this system is most fruitful in the Core area of Downtown College Park between Winter Park and Stetson Streets, with the highest priority on the Vassar Street intersection.

Mr. Kersey echoed his support of a parallel alley-way system and its benefit as a transition to the existing neighborhoods. He also provided a parking analysis of Downtown College Park which showed a deficiency of 1,000 parking spaces according to national standards for retail.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:10 PM, with the ability to further discuss the parking issues and traffic issues at the next meeting.