

Saint Mary's College High School Master Planning Process

Summary Report of Community Meeting – May 2, 2006

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Background

This meeting was the fourth in a series of community meetings for the proposed Saint Mary's Master Plan. The purpose of the meeting was to inform neighboring residents of Saint Mary's progress on the master plan and to provide opportunities for comment and discussion. Since the last meeting held on February 1, 2006, the school's master plan committee has made significant progress on specific aspects of the plan. The school is focusing its efforts on the highest priority activities; these activities can be completed within the next three to ten years. Currently, the school does not have funding to implement the plan; however, fund raising efforts are underway for the renovation of the track and athletic field complex.

Community Meeting Summary

Participants were asked to sign-in and each was provided a copy of the agenda, updated master plan summary and a comment card. About thirty people attended the meeting including: nineteen neighbors, the Mayor of Albany, the City of Albany Planning Director and the Director of Community Development, Berkeley Councilmember Laurie Capitelli and ten representatives from Saint Mary's.

Brother Edmond opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking the neighbors for their continued interest and involvement in the development of the plan. The meeting featured a series of presentations about specific elements of the master plan. Joan Chaplick, MIG, facilitated the meeting and Lou Hexter, MIG, recorded comments on a large wall graphic. Participants were also encouraged to provide comments in writing on the comment card they received when they arrived. The comment cards were collected at the end of the meeting and participants could also return the cards by mail to MIG by May 15, 2006.

Educational Program Needs

Pete Imperial, Saint Mary's Principal, was the first presenter and he provided a brief description and review of the school's educational needs. He emphasized the master plan would address the needs of the current enrollment. With reduced class sizes, increased use of technology and other changing educational requirements, Saint Mary's needs to modify its classroom and administrative spaces, some of which are in aging facilities, to continue to be able to provide a quality education and extra-curricular activities for its students.

Revised Draft Conceptual Master Plan

Hal Brandes, Dahanukar Brandes Architects, presented a summary of the revised draft conceptual master plan. He referred to the updated and detailed campus plan that was on the back page of the comment card. The diagram was consistent with what had been presented at the February meeting, however, items in the plan had been further refined and re-numbered to reflect the priority order in which they will be developed. Hal and members of the master plan committee have had meetings with small groups of neighbors and individual homeowners to get feedback on how the school could address some very localized issues. The details of Hal's presentation were outlined in the revised and updated master plan summary document which was distributed to all the participants when they arrived.

Proposed Track and Field Complex Renovation

Bill Drulias, Director of Design, Beals Sports, provided a detailed presentation about proposed improvements to the track and field complex. This facility is a high priority for the school; the track and field are in poor condition and there are concerns about the safe use of both. Bill described the proposed landscaping plan, modification to the bleachers, and installation of turf. He answered questions throughout his presentation and used numerous drawings to illustrate his points. He also provided detail about the landscaping plan and plant materials that were under consideration.

There were several comments made by participants regarding the bleachers. Concerns were expressed about the dimension of the bleachers and how they might reduce lighting for the homes directly across the street. There were concerns about litter collecting under the bleachers. Bill explained that the bleachers would accommodate about the same number of seats as the existing bleachers and be configured to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A ramp would also be installed.

Participants expressed concern about the potential success of the plantings proposed for under the bleachers. Bill explained he would select shade tolerant species appropriate for the conditions. There was also a concern expressed about the possibility of homeless people camping under the bleachers. The school responded that campus safety is a high priority and the campus is monitored to ensure that no one stays on the property overnight.

There was some discussion about the proposed landscaping plan and related maintenance. The landscaping would be irrigated mostly with bubblers and the landscaping maintained according to a plan that Bill will provide. Bill noted that the school's investment in the new landscaping was an indication of their commitment to the project since the cost of having to redo a poorly maintained landscaping plan would be very expensive. The eucalyptus trees, which are hazardous and prevent other plants from flourishing, will be removed and replaced with fast-growing species. It will take an estimated 3-5 years for the trees and landscaping to begin to fill in. It was suggested that there be consultation with an allergist before certain tree species were selected. Ann Chaney from the City of Albany commented that the City has been moving towards smaller street trees. Bill noted that he has been working closely with the City of Albany's recommended plant list during the development of this plan.

There were several questions about the ability of the proposed landscaping to reduce noise. Bill responded that the landscaping would do little to reduce noise. He noted that a significant density of plant materials is required for there to be any noise attenuation. The landscaping is being installed to provide screening and amenities to the site. Throughout the process it has been acknowledged that the landscaping would not address any noise issues.

Creek Restoration Activities

Emma Gutzler, Restoration Coordinator, Urban Creeks Council (UCC) opened her presentation showing digital video footage of steelhead trout filmed in Cordonices Creek. She then gave a power point presentation describing the restoration activities proposed for

the site. Emma described how UCC and the school are working in close partnership to implement activities that will restore the riparian corridor.

Emma briefly described the Watershed Restoration Action Plan for the creek and shared the goals for the Albina restoration site. The goals include: stabilizing the channel banks, installing step-pools, re-establishing a fish population in Codornices Creek, establishing native plant community, and involving the community in stewardship of the creek. The eucalyptus trees that are unsafe and causing bank erosion will be removed. Some trees must also be removed to allow for native vegetation to become established and thrive in the riparian corridor. The project is scheduled to get underway over the summer and is funded by CALFED.

Next Steps

Ann Chaney, Community Development Director for the City of Albany, was the final presenter and she provided an overview of Saint Mary's next steps in the process. Saint Mary's will meet with the Planning and Zoning Commission in an informal study session. The meeting will be open to the public, but the focus of the meeting is to allow for informal discussion between the school and the City. After that, the school's next step will be to submit an application for the master plan and field project. The City would then begin the environmental review process to determine if for example, a special study or scoping meeting was required. The environmental review would determine the level of documentation or other activities needed. Coordination meetings between the Cities of Berkeley and Albany will also need to be held.

The school intends to submit the documentation for the track and field project and the master plan at the same time, as requested by the City of Albany. However, for safety reasons, the field is a high priority project, and should there be substantive and unanticipated delays with the master plan, the school will explore with the City of Albany advancement of the track and field project separately in order to begin field improvements in a timely manner. Ms. Chaney indicated that this would be acceptable.

Joan Chaplick reminded the group that the school does not plan to hold any additional community meetings. The focus instead will be to continue to meet with neighbors in small groups or as individuals. The school will hold site-specific informational meetings in the next 2-3 weeks. Neighbors will be mailed a schedule with the time and locations of the meetings.