**MLK Subarea Plan/EIS Working Group
Meeting Notes
People’s Community Center, 1602 South Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Tacoma, WA
Thursday, September 13, 2012 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

* **Mary Barrett(Allen Renaissance)**
* **Justin Leighton(Central Neighborhood Council)**
* **Dawn Rodin(Hilltop Action Coalition)**
* **Eric Crittendon(Hilltop Business District)**
* **Mike Denney(MultiCare)**
* **Walter Zisette(Tacoma Housing Authority)**
* **Dorian Waller(Tacoma Urban League)**
* **Connie Brown(Affordable Housing Consortium)**

**Welcome and Introductions: Justin Leighton**

**Link Expansion Alternatives Analysis: Sound Transit**

 Justin Leighton stayed in the room but recused himself from the conversation as Dawn Rodin began the discussion. Eric Critendon shared a booklet of proposed alternatives Sound transit had provided at one of the scoping hearings. It contained criteria for choosing an expansion route as well as several routes already proposed. There was debate as to which route should ultimately be chosen, but everyone agreed it should pass through the MLK subarea. Consequently a vote was passed to send a letter to Erin Hunter describing the supported

route as well as the reasons for support according to Sound Transit’s criteria. Names/signatures would be added by supporting members. Tom agreed to draft the letter and include metrics and rationales from growing transit communities.

**Tom Beckwith of Beckwith Consulting:**

**Housing Survey Status:**

 Tom Beckwith reminded everyone present that the survey was still available on the website. It has also been distributed to UWT, Evergreen College, and both hospitals.

**Catalytic Sites Envelope Analysis:**

 Tom also spoke about the analysis for five catalytic sites. He wanted to emphasize that an

envelope feasibility study is not design oriented. Rather its purpose is to combine values and inputs.

 The first was on the corner of MLK and 11th which is currently owned by MLKHDA. The structure shown was described as a platform, podium building. Parking could also be included relatively cheap at around $15,000/stall vs. The normal 30,000/stall for underground parking because of the design proposed. The design was informed by a survey conducted a number of years back investigating the demand for artist loft space. The results were a market of 400-500 artist lofts throughout Tacoma.

 The second site included the four properties around the former Browne’s Star Grill. This study’s feasibility was based on a cost of roughly $3 mill. to retrofit the current buildings. The suggestion was made to amortize it with other projects. Reuben McKnight from Landmarks and preservation claimed that 3 exterior sides must be preserved for it to qualify for tax abatement subsidies. Economic viability is not considered in historic preservation. Historic preserved buildings can sell their tax credits.THA has proposed the concept of 70 units of housing marketed toward hospital staff. Negotiations will need to be made with the city in order for a developer to acquire the property. Cit control will also be an important issue as an interjurisdictional transfer should include a clause requiring integrating preservation into the design. While the primary goal for the steering committee remains to preserve the entire building, there is an understanding that it may stifle development. There is also a difference between some of the organic adaptive reuse developments that have occurred in other parts of the city, as well as the forced restoration of unprofitable buildings. Affordable housing will also need to be part of the final plan in order to obtain the tax credits available. 50-60% will be aimed at AMI.

 The third site was the municipal services building also on MLK. While the lot is small at around 40ft x 130ft. it is 3 stories with an opportunity for 11 units.

 Number four was the parking area on the Sav-A-Lot site, which could house up to 14,000sq. Ft. of artist lofts, 20,000sq. ft. of office space and 145 new housing units.

 The last site was the parking area around Safeway. The example of row housing was used for frontage in the parking lot. This sparked discussion about the possibility for Safeway to move or redesign their building. Eric Critendon didn’t think that was very likely due to previous conversations he had with Safeway representatives. Tom’s final comments discussed the challenge of changing the brand of Hilltop while still preserving its historic character. He also compared it to Harlem’s entertainment attractiveness, in that people must want to live there before businesses will follow the market. Many floor level retail units will have to be nonprofit loss leaders at first.

**DEIS Status**

 Tom has stated the EIS will be written by October 25, 2012. The first part will be what action is planned. This will be followed by a narrative explaining the context of the plan. It will be more technical but still user friendly. The last part will include ordinances and RFP’s.

Upcoming Open House

 The upcoming open house will be October 25, in the Evergreen Lyceum. Like previous open houses it will include boards that attendees can browse at their own pace. A public survey will also be available for people to critique and prioritize the work demonstrated.

**Planning Commission and City Council Presentations**

 Brian Boudet spoke about the excitement of the planning commission with the work being done. He will be going in front of the city council soon to update them on the plan as well as highlight specific issues.

**Next meeting:** Second Thursday of the month

October 11, 2012; 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.; People’s Community Center