

## Advisory Planning, Architecture, and Aesthetics Committee

### DEC 9, 2008 - MEETING OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

#### IN ATTENDANCE:

**Committee members:** Kathy Lowery, Susan Phillips, John Delano, Janet Riker, David McCaffrey, Dan Truchan, Joe Ferguson, and John Giarrusso.

**Staff:** Errol Millington, David Laccetti, Randall Olocki

**Guests:** none

#### 1. Landscape Master Plan: Campus Entrances and Podium Planters

*APAAC is being asked to comment and endorse some early recommendations of University landscaping consultant, Trowbridge & Wolf, who have been tasked to assess the current condition of University uptown plantings and landscape design and provide a master plan for future upgrades. The early recommendations focus on campus entrances and the large concrete Podium planters.*

- Some early conclusions of the ongoing Landscape Master Plan is that the five (5) major entrances to the Uptown campus (Washington Avenue West, Washington Avenue by Circle, Washington Avenue East, Western Avenue, and Tricentennial Drive) have aging plantings, a lack of uniformity in design, and require a greater sense of scale and landscape visual cues to signify that such entrances are to a major University center.
- Trowbridge & Wolf provided two schemes to make improvements to these entrances: a “formal” scheme and an “informal” scheme.
- The formal scheme would, generally, expand the width and breadth of the entrance with more open green space, but arrange trees, evergreens, and other plantings in a formal, linear fashion. The informal scheme would similarly expand the breadth of the opening/entrance, but stagger plantings and provide more informality.
- APAAC members discussed the benefits of both schemes but generally agreed that the informal scheme provides the dramatic and improved entrance desired, but would require less rigorous maintenance given the greater flexibility for planting and reduced vulnerability for something to seem “off” should one or two plantings die or become damaged.
- Another early focus of the consultant was to provide recommendations regarding the ultimate disposition and species selection of the concrete Podium planters. Trowbridge & Wolf mapped each of the planters and have documented the micro-climates which challenge plantings in unique ways depending on their location on the north/south/east/west portion of the podium and/or their relative placement under the Podium canopy and overhangs. Each location poses its own sun, wind, and rain challenges.
- Given these micro-climates, the consultant recommended that the planters on the north face of the Podium (facing Washington Avenue) be retained and improved with hardier, more colorful perennial options (with species selections discussed in subsequent report findings). The reasoning is that the north face of the Podium is the more formal “front door” to the campus and should preserve the aesthetic and architectural intent of Edward Durell Stone.
- Conversely, given the wind, sun, and rain issues and the lower prominence of these sides, Trowbridge & Wolf recommended that selected planters on the east, west, and south sides of the Podium be removed, as decades long attempts by the University to ensure that plants survive in these locations have failed.
- APAAC members discussed the implications of eliminating any of these large, permanent planters which have become part of the fabric of the Uptown architecture. The committee was informed that the Getty grant study of the preservation of the campus (currently in draft form) had recommended retaining all of the planters despite their challenges to become viable planting vessels.

- After discussion, APAAC generally agreed to retain all of the planters, but instead of futility trying to get species to survive, and instead of leaving only dirt or debris in the planters, that campus planners design a way to make them attractive in some other fashion. For example, they could be capped off with cobblestones and/or made into options for more seating.

## 2. Lighting Master Plan: Policy Issues

*APAAC was updated on the near final Lighting Master Plan, a comprehensive document which provides specifications for lighting fixtures for both interior and exterior locations on campus. The Lighting Master Plan considers issues of energy efficiency, safety and lighting levels, maintenance and upkeep needs, and campus preservation goals. Some policy issues have emerged, however, regarding changing practices and/or impressions of campus lighting. These selected issues were discussed by the committee.*

- The first issue brought to the committee was the lighting recommendation that would actually reduce the technical intensity of lighting in selected exterior locations such as parking lots.
- It was found that the foot candle level of lighting in some areas on campus actually provides greater illumination than recommended by national standards for safety and efficiency. The study recommends that future upgrades in these areas should, instead, seek to reduce lighting levels and make other important lighting improvements to actually provide a greater sense of safety. These improvements include: changing the architecture of the fixtures to significantly reduce glare (which actually reduces the ability to effectively see at eye level); changing the technology of the light fixture to provide more white light and less "orange/yellow" colored lights (again improving the quality of the light); spacing light fixtures in a way to provide a more even application of light across wide areas; and discouraging pedestrian access after dark to certain special areas on campus such as the Indian Pond area, by not lighting those areas and installing special signage indicating as such.
- APAAC discussed these recommendations and generally agreed that quality of lighting is as important as the quantity. For example, John Delano described the bad glare caused by the roof-mounted spot lights on the Podium. There was agreement, too, that upgrades should be done in a well-planned fashion so that adjacent areas (within the vista of a pedestrian) are consistently handled.
- The second issue brought to APAAC was the Lighting Master Plan recommendation that the blue lights should be altered so they do not continuously flash. The consultant could not cite another campus that operates these emergency phone lights in this fashion. The consultant's findings were that the continuous flashing created a general sense of unease, as if the campus were experiencing a real-time emergency condition.
- John Giarrusso and others in the committee talked anecdotally of comments made by first-time campus visitors experiencing a heightened state of anxiety due to the continuous flashing of such lights, especially at night when the campus landscape has so many of these lights flashing at the same time.
- Alternate options for the blue lights would be a slower, "less urgent", pulsing of the lights or perhaps change to no continuous flashing at all – limiting flashing to only when they are activated in a true emergency.
- The committee could not come to consensus. Some recommended making the changes suggested above while others respected the fact that the campus police office preferred the flashing and such preference should prevail. No action was taken and the issue of blue lights was tabled as an administrative decision for senior administration consideration.

## 3. Update on Podium "Sky Domes" Project

*As a follow-up to the September 16, 2008 meeting, APAAC was provided more refined design options for selection for the domes intended to cover certain openings on the Podium.*

- Errol Millington provided three options for committee consideration: traditional E.D. Stone design (similar to that over the Campus Center); “pillows” design made of fabrics; and hole-cut design for major expanse over central (between FA and A&S buildings) opening.
- John Giarrusso explained that the campus facilities staff strongly preferred the traditional E.D. Stone design as it is the most durable and most consistent with the preservation recommendations of the Getty grant consultants. The “pillow/fabric” design was too untested in this climate and could not be relied on to endure into the next decades; and the hole-cut design would be too structurally challenging, given the pre-cast concrete construction of the Podium canopy and the location of steel reinforcing rebar.
- After brief discussion, the committee concurred and recommended proceeding with the traditional dome design.

#### 4. General Overview of the Getty Grant Project

*A Getty Grant was awarded to the University in 2008 to study and recommend standards for preservation of the Uptown campus. The study is in its final draft form. APAAC was provided a very brief overview of findings and conclusions of the study.*

- With time running out for this meeting, APAAC was provided an overview of the study and described the study's intent of documenting the architectural history of the Uptown campus and cataloging certain locations and features of the campus that are most important to retain and restore for historic/preservation reasons.
- John Giarrusso explained that the APAAC group is incorporated into the Getty study as an important body that should continue to have a central role in reviewing planned campus renovations and upgrades and to review/recommend approval of such upgrades through a lens that strongly considers the preservation principles cited in the Getty report.
- There as brief discussion that such review should occur on larger projects with a demonstrable potential impact on architecture or preservation and not on each and every planned interior or exterior renovation.
- A greater overview of the study would be provided at a subsequent meeting.