

Project Stakeholder Meeting

DATE: January 17, 2020 (*REVISION DATE: 2/12/20*)

MEETING DATE: January 10, 2020

RE: ALBANY TRANSPORTATION CENTER

FROM: AUSTIN WRIGHT

- I. Project Stakeholder Meeting
Department of Community & Economic Development
1st Floor Conference Room
230 S. Jackson Street

1:30pm-3:30pm

Attendees: Sharon Subadan, City Manager

David Hamilton, Albany Transit Director

Tennasha Gresham, Superintendent of Operations

Barry Brooks, Assistant to the City Manager

Lequrica Gaskins - Downtown Manager

Shelena Hawkins, Director of Community & Economic Development

Paul Forgey, Director of Planning and Development

Kerrie Davis, Transportation Planner

Tammye Pettyjohn Jones, Office of Congressman Bishop

Mark Lambert, GDOT

Patricia Downs, GDOT

George Buchanan, COA Chairperson

Sherrell Byrd, SOWEGA Rising

James B. Pratt, SOWEGA Rising

Dedrick Thomas, SOWEGA Rising

Amna Farooqi, SOWEGA Rising

Michael A. Harper, SOWEGA Rising

Bruce Capps, SAVE THE RITZ! SAVE HARLEM!

David Maschke, Maschke Associates

Orlando Rambo, Destiny Group Inc.

Tommy Gregors, Thronateeska/RiverQuarium Director

Omar Salaam

Lester Love, NBA

Taylor Kitchens, NBA

Austin Wright, NBA

CC: All Attendees

A.L. Fleming, Albany State University

Thelma Adams Johnson, Chair of Downtown Development Authority

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Bárbara Rivera Holmes, President of Albany Chamber of Commerce
Rashelle Beasley, Executive Director of Albany Convention & Visitors Bureau
Darrell Sabbs, Legislative Affairs of Phoebe
Lisa LaRue-Baker, THPO of United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma
David Proctor, Traditional Cultural Specialist of The Muscogee (Creek) Nation
Craig Leake, Greyhound
John Isaacson, First Group

- 1.01 David Hamilton gave brief introduction.
- 1.02 Mark Lambert gave an overview of GDOT's responsibilities and expectations with project. There are multiple funding sources for the project but the primary is the Federal Transit Administration. Public involvement, standard construction processes, procurement, and tracking of change orders will need to be compliant with Federal standards. GDOT will administer the funding and process payments. Mission: GDOT wants to provide quality public transportation to citizens.
- 1.03 Sharon Subadan emphasized this is a community project. We want community input to redevelop Harlem.
- 1.04 Lester Love gave an overview of the recently completed Environmental Assessment. He also presented Conceptual Design, including site plan, floor plan, and images of architectural character.
- 1.05 Current thinking is that the 313 Highland Ave. parcel will not be purchased by City for project stormwater management. Stormwater management for the project will be handled underground.
- 1.06 Bruce Capps asked what the process will be going forward. The City will collect public input, review with the Design Team, and develop recommendations for incorporation into the design. Team will come back for future meetings. Date for next meeting will be set after input is received and reviewed.
- 1.07 Sherrell Byrd asked if community input had been used in developing the Conceptual Design. David Hamilton noted previous public outreach efforts, including the site selection process and the posting of the EA. Lester Love said the Conceptual Design was developed as a "measurement tool" for the environmental assessment. The concept is now being used to help facilitate responses and input from the community.
- 1.08 Bruce Capps asked if the design is fixed. Lester Love stated that the Conceptual Design is a "seed diagram" that will grow in the coming months. It provides the community with something

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to respond to. The Conceptual Design does reflect the building program and space needs of Albany Transit and Greyhound, building & zoning regulations, and Historical Guidelines, which is a good starting point to solicit comments.

- 1.09 Sherrell Byrd said that the community members she represents are completely against impacting the Ritz Cultural Center in anyway, but the community does welcome the Transportation Center. They look forward to the station being a revitalizing element in the community.
- 1.10 **Lester Love said** community will be responsible for repurposing and redevelopment of the Ritz Cultural Center. *(To clarify, the scope of the Transportation Center does not include the Ritz Theater or Cultural Center.)*
- 1.11 Sherrell Byrd expressed interest in public/private partnerships that could act as a catalyst for further economic development in the Harlem community.
- 1.12 Sherrell Byrd asked of NBA's experience in working with the African-American community. Lester Love noted that NBA has worked with a diverse range of ethnicities in many locations across the U.S. (Atlanta, Miami, Houston, LA, Honolulu, Raleigh/Durham, Athens, Birmingham). The Harlem Commercial District has a very rich history. **NBA's transit work on the Birmingham Intermodal and Savannah Downtown Transit Center were both in predominately African-American Communities.** The archaeologists and historians that helped develop the EA will be continuing to work on the project through the design phase.
- 1.13 Michael A. Harper asked if "rich history" was included in EA. Lester Love stated that one of the 13 categories of the EA is Cultural Resources, which includes historical and archaeological. A cultural resources firm was used to do this analysis. **African American influences are in article 4.4.1 of the EA.**
- 1.14 Bruce Capps asked if "social history" was one of the categories of the EA. There isn't a category called "Social History", but there are historical, archaeological, and environmental justice categories. Lester Love noted that StoryCorps recordings are a way to capture the history of the area by interviewing locals and recording their stories that could be later accessed by the public.
- 1.15 Bruce Capps reiterated need to preserve the Cultural Center. He felt parking is excessive. There is enough parking around the area. Lester Love explained some parking is needed for employees and Greyhound package delivery. Bruce asked how is Kiss & Ride being handled now. Currently Kiss & Ride does not have a dedicated area and happens in the street.
- 1.16 There was a discussion as to whether Kiss & Ride should be left "on-street" or included in the Transportation Center. **Majority City strongly** felt it should be accommodated in the Transportation Center.
- 1.17 Sharon Subadan emphasized that the community has been heard regarding the preservation of the Cultural Center and that it will not be demolished. She asked that the meeting now focus on constructive feedback and ideas on the current transportation center Conceptual Design.

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- 1.18 Michael A. Harper expressed that space is needed for youth and adult programs. Programs could be held in the Cultural Center and Ritz Theater, **and not in the Transportation Center.**
- 1.19 Sherrell Byrd expressed the need to preserve the look of Harlem. Saw station as only a piece of the larger community. We should not look at the station in isolation. Now that it is understood that the Cultural Center is not being demolished we can go back to the community to discuss the station design and its impact on the community. Design team has requested that comments be returned by January 31, 2020.
- 1.20 Lester Love asked for feedback from the community. What features would help make a this a successful transit center? Suggestions:
- Public computers
 - Showers
 - Lockers (interior and exterior)
- 1.21 David Hamilton stated that the Transportation Center will not be run 24/7.
- 1.22 Bruce Capps mentioned concerns that some of the windows along S. Jackson Street would be opaque and not provide a real connection between the interior and the street. Transit area is isolated from the community. Felt it does not attract people.
- 1.23 Dedrick Thomas asked if expansion is possible for future programming and if there are opportunities for rideshare. Are we keeping in mind the totality of the community history and not just the civil rights era? Also suggested providing space for other transportation companies.
- 1.24 Sharon mentions there are other services such as Blue Bus and Red Coach. She feels that is important to provide opportunities to have other long-distance transportations services accommodated in Transportation Center.
- 1.25 Attendee asked how big is the existing building? How many people are employed in it currently (**Sherrell Byrd also asked**)? How does that compare to the new building?
- Existing building is 9200sqft (according to Orlando Rambo).
 - **Lester Lover said** current Conceptual Design is approximately 10,000sqft.
 - **David Hamilton said** currently 1 City employee and 1 greyhound employee
 - **David Hamilton said** there is a plan to bring ATS staff from current transit dispatch to new building. Will add about 5 people.
 - **Lester Lover said** Greyhound anticipates 2 employees.
 - **City agreed to a reduction of parking.**

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- 1.26 Orlando Rambo asked if the City and design team can coordinate with other developers, architects, and planners to add residential spaces around the Transportation Center? Lester expressed that NBA historically has worked with adjacent projects to make sure they are mutually supportive. Connectivity is very important to the success of the Transportation Center. Signage and wayfinding will also be considered.
- 1.27 Sherrell Byrd asked how we can incorporate students and Albany State University into facility?
Attendees made suggestions:
- Food services / coffee shop
 - Barber shop / hair salons
 - Can it be adaptive for the other uses in the area?
 - Charging Stations
 - Provisions for future light rail
 - Incorporating hydropower due to City's connection with river
 - Advanced energy technologies (ex: Photovoltaics). Lester Love mentioned Georgia's adoption of a more stringent energy code.
 - Lester Love expressed that there is room for rideshare and room for the building footprint to grow.
 - Mark Lambert suggested incorporating local Native American history.
 - Dedrick Thomas suggested reflecting design elements used by Horace King, former slave and bridge designer.
- 1.28 Sherrell Byrd expressed visions for Harlem as a whole to be a tourist destination given the surrounding historic buildings, attractions, and monuments. This project was once a multi-modal project and has been changed to a transportation center, but we would still like to see trolleys, scooters, and bikes incorporated. The Cultural Center would be the only cultural center in southwest Georgia which would attract tourists. Transportation center could have more of a "welcome center" element to it for when tourists come.
- 1.29 Lequrica Gaskins suggested having power outlets and lighting in the plaza for entertainment. Suggested having a kiosk that could serve a welcome center function but also have elements that celebrates and educates people on Ray Charles. Students will want wi-fi hotspots. Dedrick Thomas suggested possibly have book donation space or library in conjunction with a coffee shop.
- 1.30 Patricia Downs emphasized that FTA will only provide money for a tenant "shell" in the building and not build out the interior space inside for coffee shops, etc. Must keep in mind FTA's "incidental use" process. Spaces inside are rented to tenants and the rent income goes to support the transit station.
- 1.31 David Maschke shared comments on the building:
- Transportation Center should not compete with surrounding vacant retail spaces
 - Design including size, canopies, windows, overall design doesn't represent the surrounding area aesthetic and feel.
 - Bring scale of building down to match 20ft-30ft lot sizes of the surrounding properties

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- Need to address Ritz Cultural Center and theater. Are we going to do something with it or not? The theater is too small. Community needs to either address the issues of the two buildings or acknowledge that they may need to go.
 - The thru-block bus circulation could lead to people making shortcuts through property.
 - Bruce Capps also mentioned that people could walk to the canopy space from the east side.
 - Orientation of building not conducive to solar gains.
 - Exterior entry doors need weather protected double vestibules.
 - Need handouts for community.
- 1.32 Lester Love emphasized that design is conceptual, not final, and will be advancing through additional phases of design.
- 1.33 Bruce Capp mentioned that site plan shows future development coming right up to theater which will not allow for expansion. Stage is shallow and may need to be made deeper.
- 1.34 Additional comments from Bruce Capp:
- Admin rooms on north end have a lot of wasted space
 - No need for washrooms
 - Need more open concept
 - Are we considering all the turning lanes coming in from the north end?
- 1.35 Meeting adjourned

Attachments:

- Meeting Agenda
- Meeting Sign-In Sheet
- Conceptual Design Slides (Site Plan, Floor Plan, and Architectural Character Images)