

## MEETING MEMO

PROJECT: Steering Committee – State Capitol Master Plan Update

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PROJECT #: 08042

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DATE/TIME: April 17, 2009

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LOCATION: Department of Public Safety – Conference Room

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RE: Master Plan Update

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ATTENDEES: See Attached:

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Comments, additions, or corrections to this memo should be communicated in writing to Confluence within seven (7) days of issuance. If no comments are received within that period, this memo will be assumed accurate and filed as part of the permanent record for this project.

### ITEMS:

1. The street section of Grand, previously proposed to become a boulevard with a 16' wide planted median is now proposed as one lane in each direction with wide, landscaped sidewalks. This will allow vehicles to pass a stalled vehicle, yet substantially reduce the distance that pedestrians must cross. *Question:* Do we not want to encourage people to use Grand? Otherwise no-one will ever get to East Village. *Response:* The intended function of Grand is to sustain good flows while making it a safer street for pedestrians to cross. Through traffic will increasingly use MLK as well as I-235. The function of Grand will be more as a destination route.
2. *Question:* Why not more bike lanes on Grand and the other streets in this area? *Response:* A central area study is being conducted by the City.
3. *Question:* How narrow could a median be? *Response:* 10' would be the minimum to accommodate left-turn lanes where they are needed.

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4. Currently, the north side of the Capitol is treated somewhat as the 'back'; but there is no justification of this, as views from the Capitol Neighborhood north of the freeway illustrate. Land slopes up towards the freeway, unnecessarily restricting views from the I-235 driving lanes.
5. Extension of the campus space north of Grand could be an elliptical loop, perhaps extending to Lyon and described by a footpath: green within and conventional street grid outside it.
6. *Comment:* When MLK is completed, 6<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> will probably carry more traffic, and future office and parking locations may be anticipated along the south edge of the Capitol grounds. New views of the Capitol will become apparent to users of MLK.
7. An early candidate for replacement is the Wallace building, in part because of its condition, in part because of the poor quality of working environment and low space efficiency that it provides. The large, state-owned parking garage immediately west of Wallace is underused, and could serve the needs of a new office building with no further investment. Those savings would be offset by temporary relocation of occupants during reconstruction.
8. There is a hidden subsidy in free parking; this is inequitable for employees who do not park at the Capitol. It is suggested that a way be found to correct this inequity, and at the same time begin to fund alternatives: bike and transit facilities. These measures would contribute to reduction of carbon usage at the Capitol.
9. Another way in which parking demand and carbon use could be reduced would be by substituting Zip Car or a similar subscription program for the fleet of state-owned vehicles.
10. *Question:* Will the team examine the pedestrian crossing place at the History Museum on Locust?  
*Response:* We spent some time observing that intersection. Changes are planned there, and at 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets.
11. *Comment:* The Capitol Grounds are in effect 'Central Park' for Des Moines. The plan should list such assumptions as resolution of the security issues so that free entrance to the Capitol building can be restored. Assume removal of certain departments out of the Capitol and into another building, presumably north of Grand. Replacement of the Court Street Bridge, removal of the Grimes Building, removal of parking from the east forecourt of the capitol – all of these will have considerable influence over what the master plan can accomplish. The assumption of street vacations being allowed by the City will affect what can be done, especially north of Grand. All of these assumptions should be made explicit in the master plan.
12. *Question:* What are the five greatest challenges to the master planners? How have values in 1913 endured and how changed?  
*Response:* New values, such as sustainability, will feature in the current plan, though often these are restatements of their predecessor values, such as permanence and quality. It will be important to achieve a balance between such issues as risk assessment and aesthetics. We should not allow ourselves to be stampeded into over-reaction to fears of the moment.
13. *Comment:* It should be recognized that restoration of the Capitol will not be completed until the sea of parking is removed from its site. There should be a clear message about this in the master plan. Enjoyment of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument is similarly compromised by a litter of parking. The views of the Capitol from Grand westbound are dominated by parking. The building is worthy

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of a proper setting – one that can introduce people to the grandeur of the Capitol more in the style of West Capitol Terrace. There should be places for art pieces and monuments.

14. *Comment:* The State Historical Museum has no windows facing the Capitol. It is time for the museum to turn from an introverted to an extroverted attitude. The potential is to educate visitors about the Capitol before they visit – to see the Capitol and the West Terrace from a remarkable viewpoint. A major remodel of the 1987 building is overdue.
15. *Comment:* We need a better perception of the Capitol for everyone. I-80 is a coast to coast freeway. Those who use it need a view of our Capitol. East 14<sup>th</sup> comes off that freeway and provides opportunities for some spectacular views of it.
16. *Question:* Should we consider the space all the way south of the Capitol to Court as gardens?
17. *Comment:* Consider proximity between functionally related departments. Another part of the plan should certainly consider the Capitol grounds. Transportation issues will undoubtedly change over the next twenty years, related to the goal of diminishing our carbon footprint. Another issue is the mix of historical and modern-looking buildings; how are they to be reconciled?
18. *Comment:* This year, preferential parking has been offered to hybrid vehicles. There were few to begin with but more now.
19. *Question:* What are the next steps? *Response:* The team will return with some of the ideas exercised through questions this month, expressed more fully. We will seek comment on this more complete set of information. July 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> are the next meetings. The team plans to send preliminary documents in advance, so that response at the meetings can be more considered.
20. *Comment:* The team should assume that the whole site from Pennsylvania to 14<sup>th</sup> extending north to I-235 will eventually belong to the State. To the south, the extent towards MLK is less clear.
21. *Comment:* Scale of the campus versus scale of the city is instructive to consider. What is an appropriate density of development and of transportation facilities? There is a distinct shift to greater density north of Grand. To what extent is the Capitol a work place and to what extent a public park?
22. *Comment:* As a city resident since 1950, the Capitol grounds have doubled in size. Every block taken off the tax rolls increases the cost to the citizen. More dense and compact development would improve the quality of the open spaces and would make the whole more sustainable.
23. North of Grand, such density is planned. There could perhaps be a greater mix of uses there; some retail at street level.
24. The information collecting process is on-going: there is a questionnaire going out, press releases, and website opportunities.
25. *Comment:* There is outreach to the east of the Capitol, but there has been little reaction or response so far.
26. *Comment:* We should demonstrate the savings that we make as a result of master planning – even the \$7,000 a month for storm water disposal – as each improvement contributes to people's appreciation of what we are doing.
27. *Comment:* Having everyone on the Capitol grounds rather than scattered across town makes the whole operation more efficient.

PROJECT:

CONFLUENCE

PROJECT NUMBER:

DATE:

IOWA STATE CAPITOL MP UPDATE

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