



North Park Community Questions on Decade of Dreams

December 2014

We appreciate the opportunity to exchange information with the North Park Neighbors group as well as the thoughtfulness of the questions and the way they were organized. Northeastern sees an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the University, its neighbors and the community at large. We look forward to continuing this conversation.

The first section of questions related to process, specifically on communications. If we are going to have a productive dialogue, information and feedback should be shared in a variety of ways: online, in print and in person. In January 2015, the University plans to introduce a website that can serve as a central hub for information that is of interest to our neighbors and larger community. The site will feature news about current and upcoming projects, serve as a repository for relevant documents (meeting summaries, agendas, e-newsletters, etc.) and provide a way for site visitors to submit input and questions. Printed information will also be distributed for those who prefer it.

Additionally, the University will host events throughout the year when community feedback can be shared: Northeastern Neighborhood Network (NNN) meetings, which take place three times a year, as well as an Open Forum, which is tentatively scheduled for February 2015. The University is currently investigating the best way to provide representation of those who live closest to the Main Campus on NNN. Also, at least one University representative will be scheduled to attend community meetings (like HNPCA) when appropriate. (Regarding residential projects, all questions and concerns can be sent to Mike Dizon, m-dizon@neiu.edu, who can serve as a liaison between neighbors and the point people involved with the projects.)

The impact that University facilities projects will have on the community and environment was the theme of the next group of questions. Two studies will be commissioned in 2015 to explore the project's impact on traffic and the environment. American Campus Communities (ACC) – which is the team member that will be responsible for the planning, development and operations of the student residences – will be responsible for conducting the environmental study. The firm that will conduct the traffic impact study has yet to be determined, but the University is currently seeking input from the community to help determine the focus of that study. Northeastern will work – as it always has in the past – with local public officials to ensure that the results of the studies are considered when determining any necessary zoning changes.

Northeastern is currently a commuter school, and the Main Campus is already designed to accommodate parking for those who drive to and from the university daily. Using existing parking available on our 67 acres, the University will be able to accommodate all parking needs of student residents. With a housing option on campus, it is expected that some students will take advantage of public transportation, eliminating the need to park a vehicle. The President's Decade of Dreams facilities master plan also calls for the creation of an additional parking structure on the Main Campus for any potential overflow.

No properties on Bryn Mawr will be razed until funding for University residential construction has been secured. Also, it is the University's hope that its presence on the Bryn Mawr block between Bernard and Kimball will reap economic benefits that extend east of Kimball and beyond the block.

The third section of the provided list of questions pertained to the project's location – as well as other community concerns. There are no plans to acquire additional properties other than the 3400 block of Bryn Mawr. One phase of the project is planned for the Bryn Mawr block while the other phase is planned for a location that is on the current 67 acres of the Main Campus. The conceptual Phase 3 of the project, which will be determined once the first two phases are underway, is also planned to be situated on the current 67 acres. (The Bryn Mawr block is eligible for TIF funds, but this is a matter that would be determined by the Alderman.)

North Park University, which is located east of Northeastern's Main Campus, currently has vacant student housing space. Northeastern does not see the rental of that vacant space as a viable option for its student housing.

Two of the many benefits of creating new student housing are increased enrollment and better student retention and graduation rates, which are at the heart of the University's mission. Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville is one example that has benefitted in both areas from the construction of student housing.

Our feasibility study and research lead us to strongly expect a healthy demand for student housing. However, under no circumstances would taxpayer dollars be used to close funding gaps — even in the event of an occupancy shortage.

Finally, resident life was the last section of questions, and topics ranged from transportation (Public transportation is currently very accessible from the Bryn Mawr block), health care (The University has always provided health care services to its students and will continue to do so), food service (Cafeteria service on the Main Campus will be provided to the residents of student housing. It is the desire of the University to also make available cooking facilities in the planned residence halls.) and sustainability (Environmental sustainability, as written in the University's strategic plan, is a key element of its identity. All new construction projects will incorporate as many green features as possible. The University's recent project, El Centro, is working toward LEED Gold-certification.)