

Urban Habitat Chicago

Meeting minutes

May 11, 2005 at 12:00–1:30 pm

The Gift House complex

1309 S. Kedzie



In attendance:

AG Anna Glenn
DH Dave Hampton
DK Dan Kastilahn
GeoP Geoff Prairie
MR Mike Repkin

(XX) denotes team member giving briefing

<XX> denotes team member responsible for action item

A. Site visit (10:30 AM–12:00 PM)

During this time, UHC members met Roy, one of the residents, walked the site observing the work to date on the community garden, and documented existing conditions at the carriage house. Refer to photos at:

<http://www.kodakgallery.com/l.jsp?c=9jeqazz.29fjqlab&x=0&y=wz78c7>

B. Carriage house (12:00 AM)

1. Discussions were held on the topic of the existing conditions of the carriage house at the east end of the site, the future base of operations for working with alternate materials. In summary:
 - a. Condition of roof membrane (water damage observed on ceiling of second floor), parapets, gutter, and downspouts should be verified at next meeting by having Owner provide safe ladder access to roof. Depth and condition of roof construction will also need to be determined.
 - b. Condition of walls for weather-tightness and structural stability (considerable cracks were observed) should be verified.
 - c. Condition of windows and doors for security and weather-tightness to be verified.
 - d. Indoor air quality to be improved in garage area.
 - e. Partitions and remains of partitions appear to be nonstructural in garage area (first floor) and would yield a suitable working area if removed; to be verified.
 - f. Mechanical and plumbing services to be verified.
 - g. Gas service/meters observed to be... somewhat precarious.
 - h. Above conditions should be satisfied before any new work begins.
 - i. Electrical service currently exists and appears stable. Verify metering.
 - j. No work should take place on second floor until living arrangements made for current occupant(s).
2. Future work
 - a. See above.
 - b. Draw existing conditions <DH> and make available for review.
 - c. Engage structural engineer and/or inspector when required <DH>.
 - d. Determine demolition schedule.
 - e. Determine design objectives and program (first floor, second floor, green roof, adjoining greenhouse, etc.).

C. Community garden

1. Plans for the community garden were shown (MR).
 - a. Schedule – none distributed; work typically occurs on weekends.
 - b. Progress to date – rough fill has been brought in; no work in progress.
 - c. Some material is available for building (bricks, soil, mud, sand) onsite.
 - d. A mural is planned for the south wall of the Gift House, facing the garden.
2. Future work – miscellaneous debris to be cleared; rough grading.

C. Orientation and objectives

1. Discussions were held on the topic of orienting and familiarizing the group to the area and to the agenda of The Gift House. Some suggestions:
 - a. Bike tour of area by UHC members.
 - b. Walking tour led by local residents.
 - c. Meet with Owner to learn intentions for involvement with UHC.
 - d. Bridge this project to the neighborhood rather than treating it as an isolated occurrence; can it have a greater meaning to the urban context, i.e. conceptually joined to the parks and treelined boulevards?
2. Discussions were held regarding involving local kids and residents in work that UHC is doing, and tying this into our materials experiments. Some suggestions:
 - a. Build a scaled map of the city or neighborhood of found materials to help orient UHC members, residents, and visitors to the area. This would provide both an experiential (subjective) and objective interpretation of the site, allowing for study of everything from solar angles to perceived boundaries. Children could do models of their own houses to be plopped into the big one.
 - b. As the carriage house first floor area appears to be an excellent space able to be cleared of debris and nonstructural partitions, materials experiments could take the form of worktables or benches for use, rather than simply stand-alone walls.
 - c. Materials experiments could take the form of site furniture, benches, provided a stable base is used (bricks, urbanite, concrete, gravel, etc.)
 - d. Mural (see C1d above).
3. Proposed use of carriage house to be determined (see B2 above).
4. Obtain/verify materials will be available for next meeting <BS, Dan Kastilahn>; additional materials have been harvested <M. Repkin>; Columbia College shop facility and materials are available for our use (GeoP).
5. Proposed staging location for future materials experiments and meetings: Coach house or courtyard at 1309 S. Kedzie.

E. Other potential projects (no discussions at this time)

1. Garden utility shed/greenhouse, 6160 W. Thorndale Ave.
Obtain update from Anu Mohanram.
2. 'Greening the Heartland' Legacy competition (JP) – email sent by DH to contact at USGBC; no further information available or discussion held on this topic.
3. Limited monitoring of a Chicago residence (DH)
Contact George Sullivan and others re: suggestions for what and how to monitor a structure <GP, Jennifer Pierce>; follow up on email to Lou Host-Jablonksy of Design Coalition <DH>
4. Urban Habitats Competition – redesign of a trailer park in Charlottesville, VA without displacing residents (DH) <http://www.urban-habitats.org/>
May 8 registration date, July 1 submission date, \$50 student fee required

D. Continuing education opportunities

1. 'Greening the Heartland 2005' Expo (www.greeningtheheartland.org/)
May 31–June 3, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago

2. Stelle, IL – Visit to sustainable community (AG)
Sunday, June 5; transportation and meals fees are likely
3. Midwest Renewable Energy Fair (www.the-mrea.org/energy_fair.php)
June 17–19, Custer, WI

F. Member networking opportunities

1. Chicago Architecture for Humanity meeting update (DH).
2. 'Greening The Heartland' Legacy project meeting. No UHC attendance.

G. Ongoing issues

1. Hold independent meeting to clarify mission statement, etc., for the purpose of clarification in future publication/advertising and nonprofit filing. Date TBD.
2. Future presentation
Date rescheduled from June 4 to Sept. 13, 24 at Chicago Center for Green Technology – **must** be confirmed by sending a proposal which describes focus of presentation (Ex.: strawbale + cob + other), target audience, associated costs. Send to Elise Zelechowski, CCGT <DH, Jen Pierce>. Should this be joined with September 20 presentation? See H1 below.
3. Sponsorship – Several interested organizations have inquired about donations of material, services, and financial assistance (BS). Members to identify best use of donations, ex.: filing for nonprofit status, laptop and projector, stipend for future lectures or seminar instructors. Inquiries on this matter may be directed to Glen Pierce.
4. Nonprofit filing – To be resolved <BS, GP>. Estimated cost \$600, to be defrayed by corporate donations? A separate meeting to be held (date to be determined) to select Board of Directors and agree upon mission statement, business plans, future goals, etc.
5. Website development – Update; many links currently inactive, blogs, case studies, etc. not functioning <Jen Pierce>
6. Advertising/media coverage – Ex.: BelieveChicago, CCGT, Dept. of Environment, corporate sponsors, local colleges and universities such as IIT, Columbia <GeoP>, Northeastern University <Mike Repkin> etc. (DH)

H. Future UHC–sponsored presentations to generate interest and support

1. September 20, AIA Chicago (DH)
Presentation by N.C. architect Frank Harmon on 'SmartHouse', preface by UHC.

J. Next meeting agenda/goals

1. Meet Owner and learn objectives/goals for partnership with UHC.
2. Start building!
6. Proposed location and date
Gift House, 1309 S. Kedzie
X:XX am, Saturday, May 21

K. Adjourn (1:30 PM)

This document constitutes an understanding of items discussed during this meeting. If a discrepancy is noted or if additional information should be considered, please contact the author in writing within 7 days, otherwise, this document will stand as a record of the proceedings with all parties in agreement.

Prepared by D. Hampton 05/19/05

cc.: attendees + UHC listserv recipients