

***Cold Climate Housing Research Center (CCHRC)
(02-06)***

To: Marshall Lind
Chancellor, UAF

From: Richard A. Caulfield
Chair, UAF Master Plan Committee

Date: July 25, 2002

RE: MPC Recommendation 02-06
Proposed Cold Climate Housing Research Center (CCHRC)

At a regularly-scheduled MPC meeting on July 25, 2002 the Committee considered a request for approval in concept of the proposed Cold Climate Housing Research Center for a site on UAF property adjacent to Fairbanks Street and south of the ARR tracks. The MPC previously heard a presentation about the CCHRC from Jack Hebert, President and CEO of the Center and received a variety of input from the university community about the project. Hebert is working actively with Ted DeLaca, Greg Krier and Bob Carlson, among others, at UAF to develop and refine the proposal.

The MPC welcomes this initiative and believes it contributes to UAF's Strategic Plan by expanding Northern research and by building partnerships between the University and the broader community. The MPC's role is to review such proposals for compatibility with the approved UAF Master Plan and to make recommendations about location, access, design, and other factors. The MPC appreciates the proactive and collaborative approach taken by the proponents in bringing this project forward.

Based on the information provided, the MPC **recommends approval in concept of the project** for the site specified in the proposal, subject to the provisions below. The Master Plan identifies this area as a potential location for a research and development park. This proposal appears to be in keeping with this identified use and indeed may advance its development over time. That said, the MPC also views this proposed development as an important opportunity to consider conceptual development of UAF property bounded by Fairbanks Street, the ARR tracks, the future Thompson Drive, and Geist Road. Thus, the following comments address not only the proposed CCHRC facility itself but also its potential relationship to potential further development of the area.

1) Site location—The MPC understands that the CCHRC anticipates use of up to five acres of land just south of the ARR tracks. The general area is known to have moisture-rich soils, so careful attention must be given to siting and access consistent with the purposes of the facility. The site has been used in the past as part of the Fairbanks Experimental Farm Fields, so the MPC recommends that the proponents get approval in writing from the SALRM Dean to avoid any unanticipated conflicts. The proponents should also work closely with the Alaska Railroad to anticipate any new developments by the railroad, including possible raising of the grade for a new University Avenue overpass.

2) Access—The MPC recommends that primary access to the site be from Fairbanks Street using the intersection now accommodating West Valley High School traffic. This single entrance on Fairbanks Street will address safety concerns and can be designed to serve future development of the overall area. Consideration should be given to how this same entrance will serve the Harper Building and other potential users in the future. Our understanding is that eventual DOT redesign of Geist Road will likely make this access necessary. Secondary access may also be considered from the new Thompson Drive. If the area develops further, there may be a need to provide easy access for shuttle bus traffic between the

core campus and an expanded research park. If so, the MPC would expect to be involved in locating any such access in the interests of safety and consistency with the Master Plan.

The configuration of the building and related parking and other facilities is also an important question. The proposal anticipates proactive use of a southern exposure for research and development activities. As design moves ahead, it would be important to consider the building's configuration in relationship to an access road to the site. The main public entrance and façade should be located in such a way that it presents an attractive view from the access road. For aesthetic reasons, consideration should be given to placing the 'back side' of the building away from any future building sites. Similarly, access roads should be designed to preserve options for future development of the area. They should adhere to standards reflected in the Master Plan for roadways and for pedestrian and non-motorized uses. These include walkways for pedestrians and non-motorized uses separated from the roadway by at least eight feet. The roadways, walkways, and parking areas should also have sufficient lighting to be safe and inviting.

In designing and building the access road, consideration should be given to maintaining a visual buffer of trees and taking other steps to accent the natural qualities of the area, as called for in the Master Plan.

Routes for potential trails for pedestrians and non-motorized uses connecting this area with main campus and the North Campus area should also be considered. The proximity of the site to informal trail use adjacent to the ARR tracks should be taken into account. An informal trail runs parallel to the tracks and is used by walkers and runners. Snowmachines are also known to use the area, albeit in violation of university and ARR regulations. Effective planning could minimize illegitimate use of the area. Construction of walkways along roads could channel such uses in beneficial ways.

3) Utilities—Questions remain about how utilities can best be provided to the CCHRC site and to other nearby building sites. Our understanding is that CCHRC intends to have its own well and a specially-designed septic system. As this project moves ahead, consideration needs to be given to how other facilities in the area might also be served with appropriate utilities.

4) Design—The MPC expects that the facility will conform to UAF standards for color selection, landscaping, effective use of southern exposure, and accessibility. The building may be visible from higher elevations on campus, and attention should be given to minimizing its visual impact from the main campus (e.g., in selecting colors for exteriors).

The unique purpose of the building—for advancing research on Northern construction—means that it may become a magnet for visitors interested in UAF's work in this area. Consideration should be given to building adjacent interpretive signs or facilities that could demonstrate the Center's and UAF's mission to innovative research, all without disrupting research activities. Constructing an area for special outdoor displays or signs illustrating ongoing work could be beneficial in educating the public about UAF's and the Center's leadership in this area.

RELEVANT UAF CAMPUS MASTER PLAN GOALS AND ACTIONS:

Goals I-V, Action statements A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, A9, A11, A15, A16, A17, A18, A20, A21, A22, A25

cc: Kathleen Schedler, FS
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bcc: Craig Dornan
Ted DeLaca