

Staff Report

**CAMPUSTOWN VISIONING  
WORKSHOP**

July 17, 2018

**BACKGROUND:**

The July 17<sup>th</sup> Campustown Visioning Workshop has been scheduled in accordance with the following Goal, Objective, and Task 1 established by the Ames City Council back in February 2018. The staff is providing the following material as background information for the workshop.

***Goal: TO STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN & CAMPUSTOWN***

***Objective 1. Encourage vibrancy in Campustown***

***Task 1*** – Review Report in Spring 2018 regarding a public plaza from Campus and Community Commission.

***Task 2*** – Building on the Commission's report, hold a workshop in spring 2018 with the Campustown Action Association, Campustown property owners, business owners, Campustown residents, ISU Student Government, and other stakeholders to discuss their vision for Campustown.

***Task 3*** – In fall 2018, direction will be provided by the City Council regarding the development of the plans and specifications for the Welch Avenue Improvements project to ensure it supports the Council's vision for Campustown.

**LAND USE POLICY PLAN:**

The Land Use Policy Plan addresses Campustown and the University Impacted Area and in the New Lands section of the LUPP. It calls for this area to be have the highest densities in the city and have a lively commercial environment at the street level. The LUPP does show a Community Commercial Node (Page 62) in the general location of Campustown reflecting the intent for high levels of commercial use.

The LUPP does not provide in depth discussion of the Campustown Commercial Area. The current language discussing the University Impact Area was the result of a Sub-Area planning effort completed in 2005. Attachment 1 contains an excerpt from the Land Use Policy Plan regarding the University Impacted Area reflecting the policies of the Sub Area planning effort.

## **CITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2005:**

The City Council has invested time, money, and resources over the years in the Campustown area. The City completed a University Impact Area Sub-Area Plan in 2005 for the commercial area of Campustown and the residential areas adjacent to Campustown. Below are examples of initiatives that the City has undertaken since 2005 within the Campustown commercial area.

- The City worked with other organizations to construct the Multi-Modal Transportation Facility located on Hayward Avenue that opened in 2012. The Multi-Modal Transportation Facility provides connections for all modes of transportation and provides public parking to commuters and the immediate area. The facility is operated in partnership with ISU.
- The City renovated the Campustown Court Park located on the southeast corner of the intersection at Chamberlain Avenue and Welch Avenue in 2009. The project was funded through a joint effort between the City and the Iowa State University Government of the Student Body.
- The City completed a Lincoln Way Multimodal Safety and Operations Study in the winter of 2018. The safety of pedestrian and auto interactions were evaluated along Lincoln Way between University Boulevard and S. Sheldon Avenue. The City committed to making safety improvements for crossings for specified intersections, including a new crossing at Stanton Avenue and Lincoln Way.
- City Council held a workshop on parking and public space in March 2017. The workshop focused on input on possible development of a public gathering place in Campustown for Parking Lot X.
- City Council directed the Campus and Community Commission to take on the task of researching and gathering input on a public gathering space. The Commission reported back to City Council in March of 2018 that the southeast corner of the intersection at Chamberlain and Welch Avenue (Parking Lot Y) seemed the most feasible location to meet the multiple interest for public space identified in the process. See Attachment 4.
- The City worked with CAA and sought public input regarding methods to reduce pedestrian/bicycle and bicycle/car collisions near Welch Avenue and Lincoln starting in 2014. In 2016, City Council approved a temporary pilot project along the 100 and 200 blocks of Welch Avenue to find a design that would provide a safer corridor for bicyclists along Welch Avenue. This Multi-modal transportation improvements pilot project will be wrapping up in the Spring of 2019 with redesign of Welch Avenue.

- The City Council established a Campustown façade assistance program in 2015 to encourage the diverse culture and uniqueness of Campustown. The City has funded this annually with \$50,000.
- The City has promoted the installation of street furniture, art, and other fixed amenities in portions of the Campustown.
- The City adopted an urban revitalization plan in 2001, amended most recently in 2016, with eligibility criteria for partial property tax abatement. The Plan prioritizes redevelopment with mixed use and structured parking, in addition to enhanced design requirements for public safety.
- The City updated its sidewalk café ordinance to more readily allow installation of outdoor tables and chairs.
- The City updated its sign regulations to more readily allow sidewalk signs in Campustown.
- The City has, upon request, closed portions of Campustown streets and waived certain fees for Campustown events. Examples of events include Summerfest and Craft & Draughts.

### **ZONING:**

Zoning for Campustown was established in 2006 as a result of the University Impact Area Sub-Area planning study. The Campustown Service Center (CSC) zoning district was created in 2006 when the Downtown/Campustown Service Center zoning district was split from Downtown zoning. At that time, the emphasis was on design standards for intensification within the core of Campustown. Standards were amended in 2016 in conjunction with the 2700 Block of Lincoln Way project.

The zoning standards reinforce the LUPP goals for intensification of uses and aesthetics with standards reinforcing minimum height and FAR, brick building material requirements, window transparency at ground level, public safety standards restrict balconies, encouraging mixed used above commercial, no parking requirements for trade and office uses, and reduced parking for residential dwellings. Although similar to Downtown Service Center zoning, the CSC standards are more detailed and address more design requirements.

### **CAMPUSTOWN ACTION ASSOCIATION:**

The Campustown Action Association (CAA) is an affiliate of the Ames Chamber of Commerce. In 2010, CAA was created as a partnership between the Ames Chamber of Commerce, Iowa State University, and the City of Ames. CAA is made up of members from Ames and Iowa State University communities. (promotions, organization, economic vitality, design). It serves as a catalyst for private and public partnerships in Ames Campustown area

The City of Ames, as part of its annual budgeting process, reviews the request of CAA for funding. If approved, the City and CAA enter into a contract to provide certain services for reimbursement. For the upcoming fiscal year, the City has earmarked \$30,650 to CAA.

**CAMPUSTOWN URBAN REVITALIZATION PLAN:**

The Campustown Urban Revitalization Area and Plan address unique interests of revitalization for Campustown. The City has a district wide URA with predefined criteria for eligibility for partial property tax abatement. Additionally, in 2016 the City Council created a site specific URA for the 2700 Block of Lincoln Way project, now known as the Union.

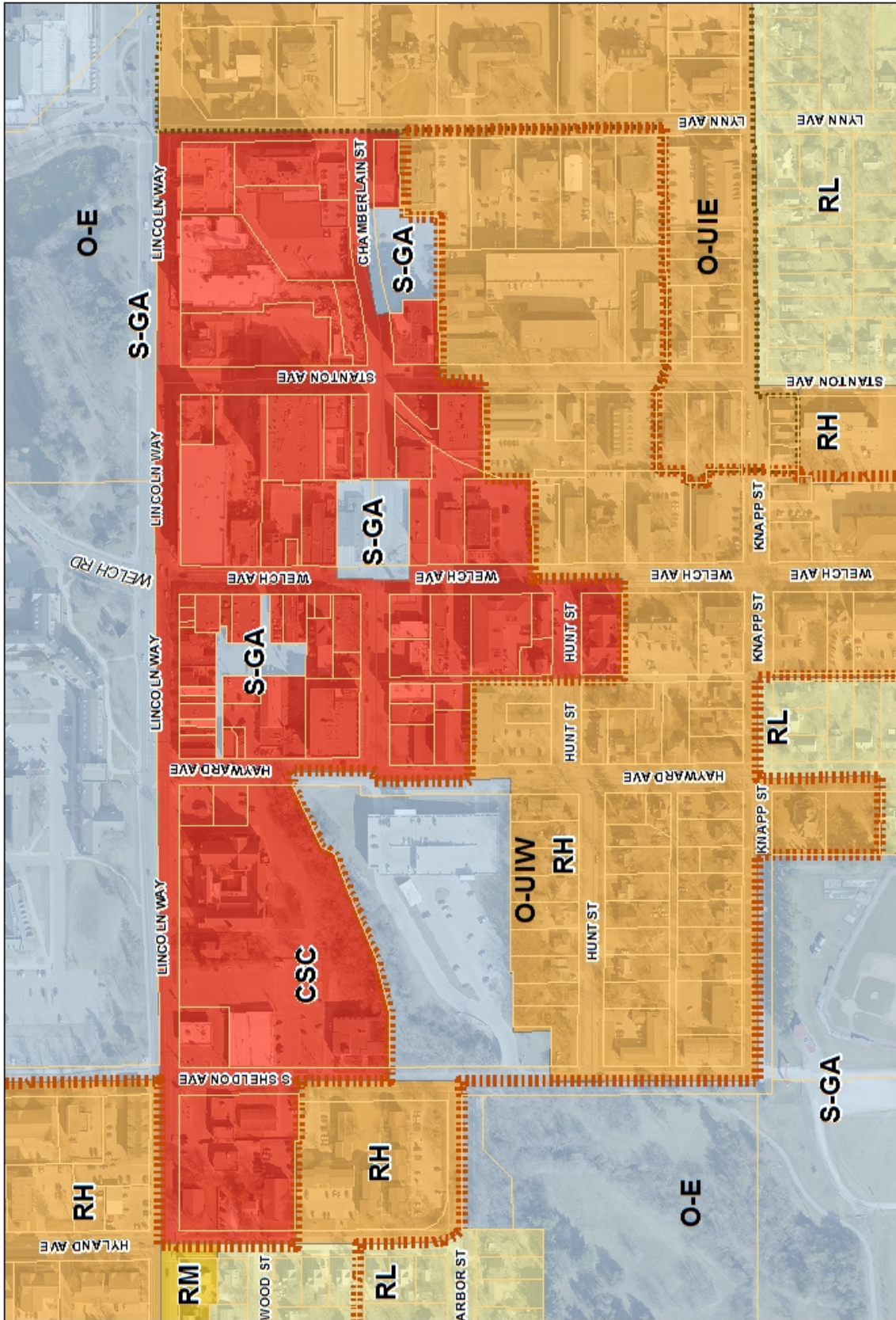
The criteria for partial property tax abatement incent intense redevelopment with requirements for mixed use development, structured parking, enhanced public safety standards, and building design requirements. The Campustown URA boundaries and criteria are included with Attachment 3.

**Attachment 1: Chapter 2 Land Use [LUPP excerpt p 53. ]**

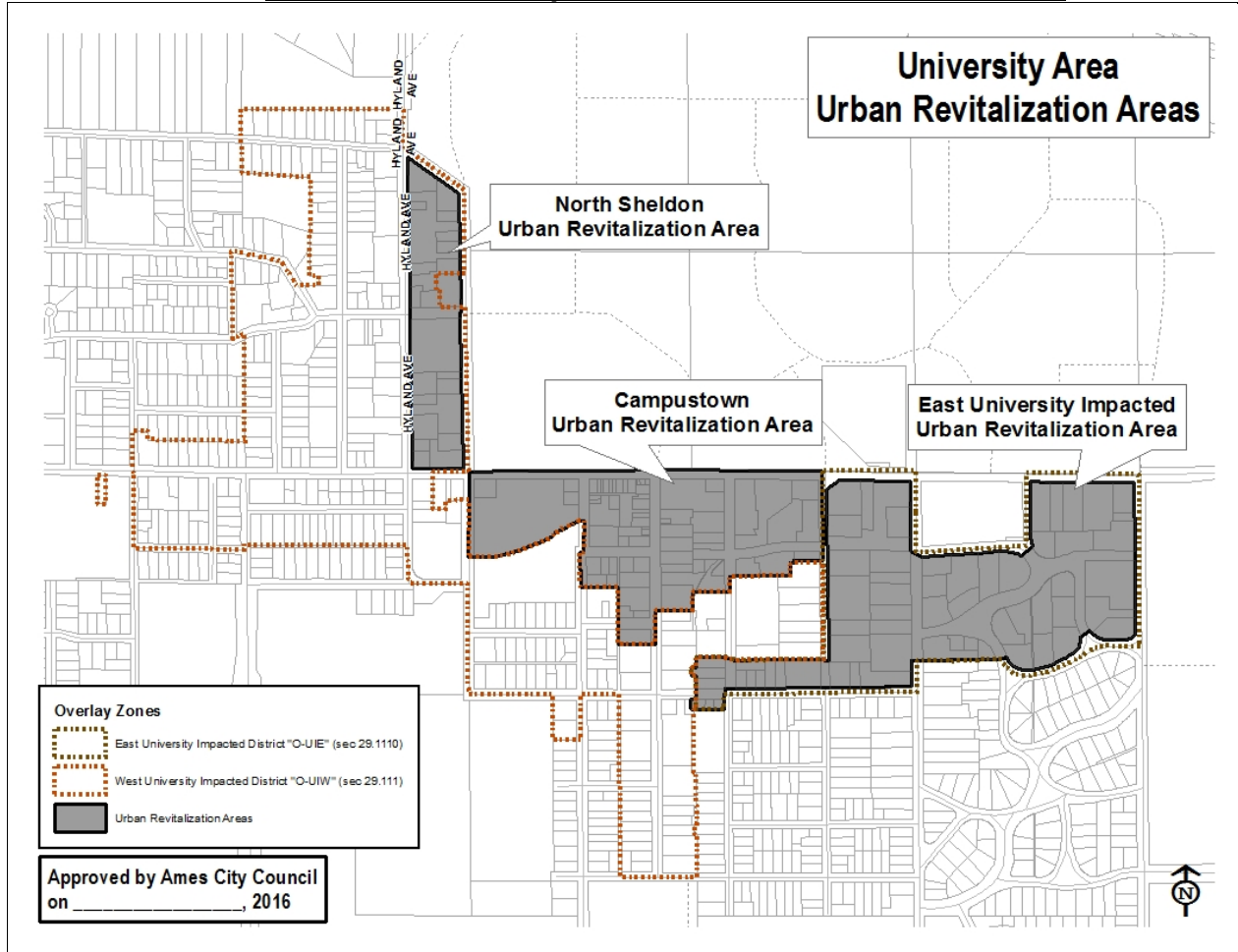
Uses. The University Impacted Area will be a distinct, unique area within the community with a great deal of variety in activities and appearance. It will be made up of districts, each with a distinct character, well defined by building use, type, scale, setting, intended activity level, and other characteristics. Compatibility will characterize transitions among these districts.

**At the core, in the Campustown Service Center, buildings will be the largest and residential densities will be the highest, supporting lively commercial activity at the street level. Building placement, design, and materials reinforce a dynamic, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood character. (emphasis added)** In the surrounding areas, uses will be multi-family residential, with densities in the lower end of the density range for high density residential uses, and building heights will be limited.

**Attachment 2: Campustown Zoning**



### Attachment 3: Campustown Urban Revitalization Area



# CAMPUSTOWN URBAN REVITALIZATION PLAN - Criteria for Renovation or New Construction

(A)

*Project must meet one criterion of three options from Column (A).*

**(1) Slum and Blighted**

Properties where a majority of the assessed valuation has been determined to be substantially unsafe or to have an unsafe use by the City Council.

-OR-

**(2) Parking & Mixed Use**

- A minimum of 70% of the total required parking is provided in a structure. If utilizing a parking deck, the restrictions in Chapter 29.406(12) of the Municipal Code must be adhered to.

and

- The first floor must be used for permitted commercial and retail uses as shown in Table 29.809 (2) of the Municipal Code or for a small production facility. The second floor must be used for either commercial or retail uses as shown in Table 29.809 (2) or for household living. All floors above the second floor must be used for household living.

-OR-

**(3) Adaptive Reuse**

- The building on the site is at least 50 years or older .

and

- 70% of the area of existing walls of the structure will remain.

and

- Historic materials and designs are preserved and/or restored.

(B)

*Project must meet one criterion of two options from Column (B).*

**(1) Underrepresented**

Properties that are to include a business use where that actual sales of the business use is below the expected sales for the business use as determined by the City Council to be of benefit to the City.

-OR-

**(2) Design Standards**

- Retail and office uses on the first floor adjacent to a public sidewalk must have direct access to the public sidewalk.

and

- Buildings greater than 3-stories shall include architectural features that create visual interest and variation in building design by differentiating building façade elements and include visual relief for long facades.

and

- Approval of master sign program by the Planning and Housing Director with signage designs that are complimentary to the building design and supports business identity

and

- Limit driveways along Lincoln Way and Welch Avenue if alternative means of access are available. No drive-troughs are allowed along the Lincoln Way and Welch Avenue.

and

- 100% of the front facades and 80% of the remaining sides of the structure shall be faced with clay brick for the first four stories. On stories five through seven any other building materials except vinyl will be allowed.

-OR-

An adaptive reuse project (A3) may use siding materials that are historically significant for all stories of a building.

(C)

*All projects with residential uses shall also meet the following criteria or equivalent as approved by City Council.*

1. Limit commercial space in the same building to the ground floor.
2. Provide separate entrances for commercial and residential uses.
3. Residential entrances are visible from the street and provide secure access.
4. Prevent access from the exterior to the interior through doors that serve only as fire exits.
5. Prohibit public access to structured parking, using overhead door and secure access control.
6. Provide transparent glass windows into all stairwells.
7. Provide camera monitoring of all pedestrian and vehicle entrances and areas.
8. Minimum widths of all exit routes: 48” for halls, 42” for doors, 60” between rails for stairs.
9. No balconies are permitted.
10. Provide for natural daylight requirements of applicable codes with exterior windows.
11. On facades facing any street use only fixed windows, note modified tamper resistant windows do not comply.
12. Design of all other windows to prevent passing of sphere larger than 4” diameter.
13. Prevent by physical means access to all roofs.
14. Where access is not required, provide security fencing controlling access to all areas between new or existing buildings.
15. Provide a minimum of four 100w metal halide or LED 6,500 lumens light fixtures on each building façade: two at elevation between first and second floors and two at elevation between third and fourth floor.



## Campustown URA Criteria Appendix

1. All Projects must comply with an option from both column A and column B. Additionally, projects with residential uses must also comply with all requirements of column C.
2. Projects requesting final tax abatement approval must be compliant with an approved Site Development Plan and have received a certificate of building occupancy from the City of Ames Inspection Division.
3. All features incorporated into a project to meet URA criteria must be maintained for the life of the tax abatement.
4. Applications for final tax abatement approval must include supporting documentation for each of the relevant criteria.

### 5. **Architectural Design Guidelines:**

The intent of this criterion is to promote building variation appearance within Campustown. The relative scale of new buildings can lead to similar building appearances due to construction techniques, uniform roof lines, and long building lengths; whereas, Campustown historically had diversity in building appearance and scale.

**Visual interest** of a building means incorporating architectural features that define buildings elements, such as the base, middle, and top of a building. Appropriate architectural features can include window details, brick and material color variations that highlight building elements and support building identity, parapets, or expressive storefront glazing systems.

**Variation and Relief** means building offsets that affect the apparent massing of the building at the ground level or for upper stories. For example, a uniform storefront at the base of building may have upper floor relief with a courtyard or changes in façade planes, alternatively, the lower levels of the building may have the appearance of multiple facades with a building offset that differentiates the façades and has a minimum depth of 6 inches. Recessed storefronts creating outdoor usable space at the ground floor can also provide variation and relief. The degree of needed facade relief will correspond to the scale of the building and length of the facade to achieve the desired effect of the URA criteria. Long facades are generally in excess of 60 feet, substantially longer façades may necessitate additional elements of relief.

### 6. **Master Sign Program**

Sign program details in the plan shall include the style of signs (blade, channel letters, etc.) location of signs, size and scale, lighting details, method of attachment to buildings.

Signage shall be orientated to the pedestrian level, internal illuminated cabinet signs with white or light color backgrounds are prohibited, channel letters should be affixed directly to the building without a visible raceway or have a backing panel that covers a creating the appearance of an overall sign face. Preferred signage would be decorative in appearance through its use of sign face materials, design, lighting, and style of signage.

In consideration of approval of the Sign Program, the Planning Director will review the Campustown Idea Book signage guidelines, scale of signage and location in relation to the building features, and lighting type. Once a sign program is approved, individual sign permits must be consistent with the sign program.

**Campus and Community Commission  
Report to Ames City Council: Campustown Plaza  
March 27, 2018**

**Direction from City Council:**

At the September 12, 2017, City Council meeting, the City Council met with the Campus and Community Commission to discuss potential projects for the Commission to address. The Council directed that the Commission should initially work to investigate a prospective Campustown plaza or gathering space. The City Council specifically mentioned the following components for the Commission to address:

1. Prepare a list of things that the City Council could consider accomplishing in a Campustown Plaza
2. Come back to the Council with the interests of various parties. Include discussion of how people, traffic, building services would get through the area
3. What is the dream for the space?
4. What are the critical features, particularly from students, to make this space useful (e.g., gathering space for music events)?
5. If this space was a gift to students, what should it have so they like the gift?

**Recommendation:**

After a number of meetings to discuss and gather input, the membership of the Campus and Community Commission recommends:

1. Securing a consultant to develop a program plan to create a gathering space at 204 Welch Avenue located on the southeast corner of Lincoln Way and Chamberlain Street (City Parking Lot Y and Campustown Court). This would expand east of the existing Cyclone Plaza and reallocate the parking area to the north of the former T-Galaxy Building.
2. It is also recommended, since this location is relatively small (55'x190', including the Cyclone Plaza), that the acquisition of the former T-Galaxy Building and lot receive consideration.
3. Two primary stakeholder groups were identified that should receive additional opportunity to inform the consultant:
  - a. Iowa State University students
  - b. Campustown business owners

**Rationale:**

The Commission investigated a variety of potential locations for a Campustown gathering space and has proposed locating it in the area at the corner of Welch Avenue and Chamberlain Street for the following reasons:

1. Most central to Campustown activities
2. Visibility issues are minimal, which improves safety of users of the space
3. Minimal impacts on adjacent properties by users
4. Lower cost for making improvements to the space (few infrastructure complications)
5. Larger, one-off and well-managed events have been held on and adjacent to this location with success
6. Loss of parking spaces is recognized but the value added by this gathering space and adjacency of the under-utilized short-term parking at the Intermodal facility compensates for the loss of spaces

**Space Utilization:**

Through stakeholder discussions, the Commission has identified that the following are key characteristics of a gathering space to be considered:

1. General Activity/Flexible use space
2. Food Truck/Vendor space
3. Incorporate art, that as possible includes existing mural on T-Galaxy building (only if building retained)
4. Good lighting
5. Refuse/Trash solutions
6. Restrooms, if space allows. Noticeable signage to Intermodal Facility public restrooms may suffice
7. Greenscape components that soften the experience (e.g., hardy plantings, trees.
8. Suggest having a pick-up and drop off location on or adjacent to this space (to accommodate taxi, Lyft or Uber)

The Commission also received feedback regarding attributes that would be incompatible or less desired in a gathering space. These include:

1. 24-Hour operation. Close at certain times to reduce post-bar closing loitering.
2. Targeted activities for young children
3. Garden or high maintenance green space
4. Large night events
5. Limited amplified music events
6. Kegs/uncontrolled alcohol consumption

**Process to Reach Recommendation:**

All City-owned properties in the Campustown boundaries were evaluated for feasibility. The Commission also consulted with members of City staff to identify opportunities and challenges with potential sites. Alternatives evaluated and comments regarding each are indicated below:

1. 115 Welch Avenue (City Parking Lot X) (located west of the storefronts along the 100 block of Welch Avenue)
  - a. Significant utility infrastructure exists in the space, making modifications expensive
  - b. Access and egress for business purposes (currently and into the future) conflict with pedestrian usage in this area
  - c. Poor lines of sight and visibility for safety and security
  - d. Noise concerns for adjacent properties
2. 134 Welch Avenue (Fire Station #2)
  - a. Will be operated as a fire station for the foreseeable future
3. 2320 Chamberlain Street (City Parking Lot Z)
  - a. Located east of Campustown core
  - b. Lot tucked between 3 buildings
  - c. Only open on street side
  - d. Limited lines of sight creates safety issues
  - e. Noise concerns for adjacent properties
4. 204 Welch Avenue (City Parking Lot Y) – Recommended site. See above.

## **Supporting Materials:**

### *Focus Group Meeting Minutes Excerpt (January 22, 2018):*

#### **Campustown Plaza Focus Group:**

The Commissioners, staff members, and invitees introduced themselves. Invitees in attendance included: Chad Watkins, Sarah Huffman, Marsha Miller, Tim Hoekstra, Katie Holmes, George Micalone, Anthony LoCerto, Marilyn McNamara, and Bridget Williams.

Tom provided some background information regarding the concept of the Campustown Plaza. He outlined the process the group would use to discuss the potential ideas for the use of the space. In addition to what the group thought the space should be, the group would be asked in a second round of idea-generation what they think the space should not be.

The group's suggestions for what the space should be were:

- Event pre-space to see what works and what people suggest for the space
- Public hammocks
- Flexible space
- Space to serve for communication between City and students
- Shade
- Something that can't be destroyed
- Tables/game tables
- Art space/music space
- Reservable space
- Information center
- Campustown map
- Ice rink
- Dog poop bags
- Rain barrels
- Study space
- Community garden
- Workshop gatherings
- Benches, flowers, and trees
- Bike tire fill-ups
- Skateboard rink
- Art
- Music stage with a shell
- Moveable planters
- Restroom facilities
- Food area
- Adjustable lighting
- Make the space bigger (acquire T-Galaxy Building)
- Lighting to safety and aesthetics
- Green space for Campustown events
- Green space for everyday use (studying, sitting, etc)
- Electricity
- Public restrooms
- Food carts

- Public restrooms
- Information center
- Lighting
- Security
- Parking
- Art area
- Small market
- Reservable shelter/pavilion
- Stage and electricity
- Food vendor area with seating
- Public garden (not a shared community garden)
- Benches
- Public park with benches/picnic tables
- Interactive art space
- Food truck or food cart space
- Community garden space or green space
- Amphitheater with permanent seating
- Table seating
- Small shelter
- Public art display
- Designated food truck space
- Parking
- Maker space
- Police outreach center
- Food trucks
- Seasonal space (ice arena in winter, beach in summer)
- Parking

These ideas were grouped into similar themes. These themes were:

1. Utility Infrastructure
2. Information
3. Amenities
4. Music
5. Art Area
6. Study Space
7. Environmental Design/Green Space
8. Mobile Vendor Area
9. Reservable

The attendees then voted for the ideas and themes they supported.

Tom led the group through an idea generation session regarding what the group thought should not be involved in the potential space.

The group's suggestions for what the space should **not** be were:

- Foam or paint parties
- Kids' sandbox
- Water feature
- Open all hours

- Kegs
- Inadequate trash receptacles
- Garden
- Poor stormwater system/plan
- Large night events
- Kid stuff
- Paved space
- Copycat space
- Parking
- Fencing
- Space intended for small children
- Things that can be easily destroyed/stolen
- Music-making things
- Things that need people to coordinate (e.g., stage)
- Parking
- Apartments
- VEISHEA 2014
- Poor lighting
- Small kids
- Events that cause traffic clogging
- Loud music at night
- Taking down the mural

Tom asked for further discussion regarding these ideas for things the space should not be. There was clarification that the comments regarding children were meant that there should not be playground equipment. It was noted that the existing space could generate negative loitering and gathering, which was a concern of some regarding a re-developed space.

The attendees then voted for the ideas and themes they felt should not be part of the project.