

MEETING MEMORANDUM

THE GIFFORD DESIGN GROUP, Inc.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE • ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

Date: 10-31-05
To: File
From: Kevin M. Alverson, *GDG*
Re: **Aquidneck Corporate Park**
GDG Project #224.522

Date of Conference: 9-20-05

In Attendance: Ron Wolanski, *Town Planner*, Town of Middletown
Sam Hogan, *Assistant Town Planner*, Town of Middletown
Ilene Spillane, *Middletown Economic Development Advisory Committee*
Jody Sullivan, *Newport County Chamber of Commerce*
Mr. Pizzarski, *Key Stakeholder*, Aquidneck Corporate Park
George H. Gifford III, *President*, The Gifford Design Group, Inc. (GDG)
Kevin M. Alverson, *Landscape Architect*, GDG

The purpose of this meeting was for the The Gifford Design Group, Inc., to review and present preliminary site assessments, formulated from Site Visits, with the Town of Middletown and any key stakeholders for preliminary feedback.

- Alverson provided an overview of GDG's findings:
 1. Assessment 1: Mail Boxes and Amenities:
 - a. GDG suggested that the existing condition of these amenities is unattractive and could benefit from a pull-out area. This could also be accompanied by a public transportation bus stop or something of that nature.
 - All those present agreed this may be an affective use of the amenities.
 2. Assessment 2: Signage Program:
 - a. GDG suggested that directional signage needs to be improved and/or replaced. One option would be to add a pull-out area similar to assessment 1 above. All those present agreed that this could be an acceptable option.
 - b. GDG suggested that the Town work with the public works department to replace the existing street and traffic signage. All those present agreed.

3. Assessment 3: Park Entrances:

- a. GDG explained that the entrances to the park do not portray a modern corporate park image, nor do they present a very strong visual identity for the park.
- b. GDG expressed that it does not appear as though either entrance is defined specifically as an entrance for Service and Park Visitors. All those present explained that the Valley Road entrance is generally considered the main entrance to the park.

GDG explained how this lack of definition appears to have led to a lack of importance on either entrance. Specifically defining the entrances as Service or Visitor could be a potential option to use the resources available to provide an emphasis on at least one of the entrances. This option, however, should be brought up to the tenants of the park at the next meeting.

- c. GDG suggested that the addition of landscape islands within the entrance drives to create a boulevard affect. This could break up the vast pavement area and provide green space at the entrances. All those present agreed.

4. Assessment 4: Existing Park Utilities:

- a. GDG suggested that the above ground utilities are visually unattractive. Also, above ground utilities may present more of a chance for power outages in storms. GDG suggested the option of moving the utilities underground if possible.
 - All those present agreed that this is a large expense. GDG asserted that the roadways are in moderate to poor condition, and if the roadways are to be repaired or replaced, it may be an opportunity to do this utility work.
 - At this meeting, it was expressed that a study is being conducted on the effectiveness of the existing utilities. This study could define whether or not an upgrade to the utilities is necessary to keep this park competitive with other large corporate parks to entice large high-tech and defense related businesses. If this study results in a need to upgrade the utilities there may be an opportunity to relocate the utilities underground.
 - Mr. Wolanski explained that this assessment should be considered, however, the results of the roadwork and utility study being conducted will decide if there is an opportunity at present to do this work. Otherwise, it may included in the master plan study as a wish list item, when additional funding is obtained.

5. Assessment 5: Existing Cul-De-Sacs:

- a. GDG explained that similar to the entrances, these cul-de-sacs pose large expanses of pavement with little green space. This is an issue where main entrances to businesses front onto the cul-de-sacs.
- b. GDG explained that adding islands to the cul-de-sacs is an issue of the town maintenance division. Different towns prefer different situations. Some Town DPW's feel that adding an island makes plowing more difficult. This should be considered further, and discussed with the town maintenance division.

6. Assessment 6: Building Appearance from Street:

a. GDG explained that company service entrances face rights-of-ways in certain locations. Where this occurs, other businesses front entrances face these service sides of buildings as well. There should be a mixture of right-of-way plantings, and individual private plantings installed to visually buffer the service elements of some buildings from the front elements of others.

- All those present agreed that this should be discussed with the tenants of the corporate park.

b. GDG asked whether there were any current plat restrictions.

- Mr. Wolanski explained that these restrictions were a part of the park when it was originally established, but have recently expired. Currently, there are only town Zoning Regulations governing the park. The town is currently working on commercial design requirements that could include landscape regulations, etc.
- New restrictions should be investigated and discussed with the tenants of the park. A more active corporate park association could benefit the park, and should be posed to the tenants for their input.
- All those present expressed that a more active corporate park association could help get future improvements done.

7. Assessment 7: Dr. John Clarke Monument:

a. GDG asked what the significance of this monument presented. It provides an opportunity for a pocket park within the corporate park, if that is something that the tenants of the park would be interested in.

b. GDG explained that the issue of a park presents a larger question. This is whether or not a more pedestrian environment is something that the town and tenants of the park is interested in.

- All those present first agreed that providing sidewalks throughout the park and a more pedestrian feel could be a good idea. However, Mr. Pizzarski (a stakeholder present at this meeting) explained that he did not feel that this site is a “campus environment,” where there is much pedestrian movement between buildings, etc. In this respect he felt that only elements such as the YMCA should be connected with sidewalks along John Clarke Road and out to Aquidneck Avenue.
 - All those present acknowledged Mr. Pizzarski’s comment, and agreed that this is something that should be discussed further.
- GDG will further the concepts and bring them to the next level by providing actual conceptual scenarios for improvements to the park. These concepts will be presented at a Luncheon Meeting at the Aquidneck Corporate Park, the week before Thanksgiving.