Plan

Mobile Workshops

Nortel’s Carling Campus

The Carling Campus Expansion consists of one million square feet of office, lab and manufacturing floor-space, accommodated in five buildings, together with supporting infrastructure (roads, parking, services, and utilities). When completed in 2001, the expansion project will have increased the campus from 1.3 million square feet to 2.3 million square feet, with the total population increasing from 4,200 to 6,000 persons. The following two articles are summaries of papers published in the proceedings of the 2001 conference, delivered as part of a site visit by conference delegates to Nortel’s Carling campus.

Master Planning and Design Issues on the Carling Campus

by Robert Marshall, MCP RPP

For over forty years of master planning and development at the Carling site in Ottawa, the phases of campus construction have mirrored the evolving character and requirements of the research and development sector of high-tech corporations. The latest master plan, completed in 1997, is based on the requirements of a changing business context, and on a more sophisticated understanding of the environment of the site. Emerging issues that have influenced master planning and the design of recent buildings include:

> Flexibility for changing future uses, realized in independent addresses, independent service access, and a simple nine-metre bay structural system with open floor-plates;

> Connectivity between buildings that creates a campus environment, allowing the convenience of central distribution, shared amenities, and certain central facilities;

> Market-driven development strategies that allow individual buildings to be leased without affecting the integrity of the campus;

> Accommodation of traffic flow and access, including transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access;

> Cost-effective design solutions;

> Focus on the quality of site development; and

> Focus on the quality of the campus, in order to create a workplace that attracts and retains the best employees.

Even now, these trends are changing the requirements for future campus plans. In particular, there is increasing emphasis on market-driven solutions. Furthermore:

> The ability to get approvals and to develop new facilities at high-track speeds is increasingly important;

> The potential for creative ownership and development strategies, such as off-balance-sheet financing, is being explored.

The potential for market-driven amenities and services that are shared with the surrounding community is also being explored as campuses are developed.

> Accommodating new growth and providing the flexibility to accommodate start-ups and new ventures is vital.

In general, HOK is finding that there is more high-tech sector development in established urban contexts. Young employees are interested in working near urban centres and the amenities of an established urban context. This is leading to the development of more transit-based sites and to the reeducation of brownfield sites.

Expediting the Development Process

by Douglas A. Grant, MCP RPP

The detailed planning and design of the Carling Campus began in February 1999, with the target deadline of November 1997 for all development approvals and the first building permit. This timeframe implied an eight-month approval process, including allowances for all statutory notice and review periods. From the start, the detailed planning and design of the expansion project was characterized entirely through the process described in Figure 1. This process included the participation of one federal, three provincial, and two municipal regulatory bodies, and involved four separate environmental assessments.

Based on the experience of the Carling Campus Expansion, the key components in expediting the development approval process can be summarized as follows.

Project team

From the outset, the project team must be aware of the “worst case” scenario plan accordingly, so that there are no surprises that may cause delays. The project team must include consultants who can define a clear blueprint for the development approval process, and client decision-makers who can define and approve project components, while addressing these in response to the problems or issues that inevitably arise.

Harmonized approval process

(see Figure 1)

The project team’s first task should be to devise a single, comprehensive process for developing the project. Too often, development approval is viewed as a sequential process in which the developer moves from one approval or permit to the next. This approach is too time-consuming for an expedited project, and increases the risk of overlooking key problems or issues that can only be addressed by backtracking.

Project blueprint

The harmonized approval process should be documented in a “blueprint” that will guide all subsequent activities of the development approval process. The project blueprint is intended to form the basis of a partnership between the project team and the approval/review agencies, so that there is a clear understanding of what is to be done, who is to do it, and when it is to be done.

Consultation and communications

The approval process often becomes more complex, and the public scrutiny more searching and widespread, as development projects increase in size. A successfully executed, expedited development project will have anticipated this by including a consultation and communications component in the harmonized approval process. This component should include the following:

> A technical advisory committee (TAC) that includes representation from all of the approval/review agencies involved. The TAC will provide invaluable input by identifying problems and issues, suggesting solutions, and detailed process and submission requirements. The TAC should include the widest possible representation from the outset, so it is much easier to have members drop out when their input is no longer required than it is to add new members and bring them “up to speed.” The first priority of the TAC should be to review and revise the project blueprint so that it is accepted as the guide for all subsequent activities.

> A public advisory committee (PAC) that includes representation from the various associations and special interest groups that might be affected by the proposed project. Here again, the project team should rely on PAC input for problem identification and potential solutions.

> A project team that is fully committed to the consultation and communications process, for it is this team that must synthesize all of the input into a preferred design that will, in turn, receive the required approvals and permits.

Flexibility and innovation

The hallmark of a successfully executed, expedited approval process for a large-scale development project is the flexibility and innovation exhibited in reaching the preferred project design. Flexibility and innovation must be initiated within the project team and be clearly demonstrated to TAC and PAC participants. A willingness to make changes, to accept what cannot be changed, and to embrace new or non-traditional ways of addressing problems and issues, will most often be reciprocated by the approval/review agencies and by the public when the project team shows the same willingness. In the case of the Carling Campus Expansion, the flexibility and innovation ranged from relatively minor (but nonetheless significant) initiatives such as shifting buildings and roads to protect significant treed areas, to the introduction of a comprehensive travel demand management plan.

Execution

The sixth, and final, component of a successfully expedited approval process can be simply stated: Do the first five from the outset.

Robert Marshall, MCP RPP was involved in the harmonized approval process for the current Carling Campus Master Plan. He can be reached at (613) 738-4160, or at d.grant@decan.com

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