

NEWTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Newton Housing & Community Development Program
Newton City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, MA 02459.
Phone 617-796-1156. TDD/TTY 617-796-1089

December 9, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Members present: Phil Herr (Chairman), Henry Korman, Josephine McNeil, Peter Macero, David Stein, Jeanne Strickland, Lynne Sweet, Dan Violi, and John Wilson

Visitors: Mr. Lepie (resident), Andrea Kelley (resident)

Presenters: Paul Ferreira (BH Normandy Riverside LLC), Tamara Roy (ADD Inc.), Steve Buchbinder (Schlesinger and Buchbinder, LLP)

Staff: Trisha Guditz, Robert Muollo, Jr.

1. Review and approval of November minutes

The November Minutes were approved with no changes.

2. Presentation of preliminary information on the proposed development at the Riverside MBTA site

Mr. Buchbinder explained that the Developers are at the very beginning stages of the process and that the purpose of the presentation was to acquaint the Partnership with the proposed Development. Mr. Buchbinder explained that the Developers have already begun to meet with members of the neighborhood.

Mr. Buchbinder explained that two development concepts are being considered. Plan A includes housing with retail and commercial/office uses and Plan B does not include a housing component.

The Developers are Normandy Properties and Blue Hawk Investments, which formed a LLC named "BH Normandy Riverside LLC." Mr. Ferreira briefly explained the two Developer's experience and background, and will forward a description of their experience in residential development in greater detail to the Partnership at a later date.

Ms. Roy then gave a PowerPoint presentation of the proposed development's preliminary master plan, in which included a multi-modal center, pedestrian ways, traffic changes, sustainability and smart growth design principles, community open space, retail and office space and residences (Plan A). .

Mr. Ferreira elaborated that although still in the preliminary stages, they are projecting 250 – 300 units of 1 and 2 bedrooms that most likely will be rental apartments, depending on market conditions.

Henry expressed concern that the construction of only 1-2 bedroom units is a fair housing issue in the form of disparate impact for protected classes. Mr. Ferreira believed that these specifications are the most feasible economically. Henry also expressed concern with the City's institutional approach of handling this potential issue in a broader context.

Trisha asked if this development required a Special Permit, which Mr. Ferreira confirmed that it does.

Mr. Buchbinder further explained the regulatory process that the Development must follow, which requires a change of the underlining zoning including a revised Planned Mixed Business Development (PMBD) Ordinance for the development and a Special Permit. The Developers are hoping to receive a zone change in the winter of 2010.

David asked if and how the Development will be phased. Mr. Buchbinder said it will be most likely phased in the following order: vehicle accessibility / traffic changes and construction of a new garage, which will help service the MBTA station. The commercial, retail, and residential components' order depends on market conditions and will be decided upon at a later time.

Peter asked how the financing factors play into the housing component of the Development. Mr. Ferreira explained that their preference is mixed-use, which includes housing. Phil explained that the PMBD must include residences, but that the City's current version does not say how many units is necessary at a minimum. Phil believed that the lack of a minimum needs further thought. Mr. Ferreira acknowledged that it is the City's decision as to what the minimum requirement of housing units of housing must be for the Development.

Josephine reminded the Developers that the City's needs should be analyzed, not just solely those of the neighborhood. Josephine wondered if play spaces and green roofs could be added to the Development.

Henry asked if the Developers are considering using public subsidy to increase the levels of affordability. Mr. Ferreira responded that everything is up for discussion at the current time, including using public subsidy.

Henry asked if there are architectural access components in the proposed development. Ms. Roy answered that all projects ADD, Inc. designs are fully ADA and AAB compliant.

David asked where the residential parking would be located on the site. Ms. Roy explained that the parking will be below the residential units and visible from the back side, but not visible from Grove Street.

Lynne asked how the needs of Newton's FY11-15 Consolidated Plan will be addressed by this Development. Mr. Ferreira stated that continuing dialogue will vet these needs and requirements stated in the Consolidated Plan.

Lynne asked what the density per square acre was for the housing component. The Developers will forward this information to the Partnership when it is finalized.

Mr. Buchbinder said that the Partnership's input was helpful and explained that the Developers are extremely flexible.

Phil explained the process moving forward, including the regulatory changes that must be considered and the timing and deadlines the City requires and how this intersects with the NHP process. Phil noted that Partnership input is strongest when provided early in the process and believes that the Partnership can help the Developers find common ground from the residential perspective at future meetings.

3. Other business

No other business

Meeting was adjourned