



EAST PROVIDENCE WATERFRONT SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT COMMISSION

Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes- December 10, 2014

DRC John Gregory, DRC Chairman
Members: John Pesce
Luis Torrado
Jeanne Boyle, Executive Director

Consultants: Glen Fontecchio, Architectural Consultant

Chairman Gregory called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.

1. Approval of meeting minutes- April 25, 2014

VOTE: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the April 25, 2014 DRC meeting: the motion was seconded and unanimously approved without discussion.

2. Public workshop- Village on the Waterfront development project

481 Veteran's Memorial Parkway

Owner and Applicant: Chevron Land and Development Company, Village on the Waterfront LLC

Assessor's Map 17, Block 1, Parcel 1

Assessor's Map 18, Block 1, Parcel 1

Assessor's Map 18, Block 2, Parcel 2

The project team consisted of: Ms. Christine Engustian, attorney for Village on the Waterfront LLC, the developer; Mr. Michael Hennessey, Chief Operating Officer of Village on the Waterfront LLC; Mr. Audie Osgood and Mr. Kevin Demers of DiPrete Engineering; Mr. Jay Szymanski of The Architectural Team (TAT) Architects; Mr. John Carter of John C. Carter Co., Inc., the landscape architect; and the financial/TIF consultant Municap, represented by Ms. Lindsay Banner.

Mr. Hennessey told the Commission that Chevron has spent \$12 million to date on: remediation of contamination; removal of a large retaining wall; water and sewer lines; and environmental testing. Another \$7.5 million has been earmarked for 2015 by Chevron.

Because market conditions have changed, the condominium market is non-existent, which necessitated the changes in the revised plans currently before the DRC. The townhouses along the waterfront have been removed and the amount of commercial space has been reduced because there is no longer a land swap with the RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT). Moving forward, Mr. Hennessey feels that it is a better plan. The local approvals were extended through 2017 due to a change in State legislation.

Mr. Osgood brought the Committee up to date on the progress being made at the Chevron property. Approvals from RIDOT include a physical alteration permit (PAP) and permits for the construction access road. The Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) assent is in

place for Waterfront Drive and the overall site. They also have a water quality certificate and RIPDES in place from the Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM).

Mr. Demers summarized the project: the \$200 million project will still have 603 residential units but the number of apartments is being increased to two hundred, to meet market demand, and they will be smaller than originally planned. These units will be the first to be constructed in Phase 1, along with the commercial component, which has been reduced to 24,000 square feet. The project will now be constructed in four phases instead of five. The roundabout designed for Veterans Memorial Parkway (VMP) has been removed. The entrance to the project and relocation of emergency access was finalized with the Fire Chief over the summer. The turnaround at the southern end of site and removal of building there were due to the end of the land swap. The promenade and patio area have been changed to allow greater public access to the waterfront area. The view corridors have been left alone or have increased, due to the removal of one story of the buildings. Phase 2 will be constructed as Phase 1 is occupied.

Mr. Demers stated that the first phases of construction would use mostly VMP but that later phases will use WD, which will be constructed in Phase 2. Mr. Osgood added that trip generation will not really change but that trip distribution may have slight changes.

Mr. Gregory said that not bringing the drop down to Waterfront Drive (WD) is, for him, a major change: there is no way to loop around entire site by car. He urged the team to build WD in Phase 1 for public access to site. Mr. Osgood said that there is some flexibility, but Phase 1 with only VMP access was what was approved by the Waterfront Commission in 2009, with WD being constructed in Phase 2. It is not practical to build it in Phase 1 due to the remediation locations. Mr. Osgood stated that they did not want the neighbors who move in to Phase One to be part of a construction site and have no access to the water. Mr. Gregory disagreed.

Ms. Boyle stated that she had concerns with the circulation within the site during Phase 1: access to WD will be not be available to all residents in the early phases of development: its intent was to relieve pressure on VMP. Mr. Demers said that modifications to the plaza required by the Fire Chief were to ensure that there would be no obstacles for VMP back up or fire trucks. The drop-off between Buildings 4 and 5 and WD is 20-25 feet: this is not an easy connection to make. Mr. Gregory stated that the DRC is concerned about the amount of traffic going on to VMP.

Mr. Szymanski, the project architect, said that the units are now a little smaller and that the buildings now have double-loaded corridors. All buildings in Phase 1 are four stories, with the same materials as were previously approved. The buildings has balconies and the rooflines rise and fall, for interest. All of Phase 1 is rental units; later phases include condominiums. Mr. Fontecchio, architect for the Waterfront Commission, stated that Phase 1 is a level plinth, like the buildings are on a big, flat platform. He is concerned that all the buildings will be same height with no variety or different character. He also stated that the characteristics of the roadways are now really access roads that connect parking lots and that they are no longer urban streets with buildings.

There is also the loss of the smaller scale of townhomes along water: the project needs to achieve that. Mr. Szymanski stated that some units have direct first-floor entry. Mr. Fontecchio replied that it is not welcoming to pedestrians and that the landscaping does not help that much. The area south of WD is concerning: it is very remote and inactive. Mr. Fontecchio said that maybe a

shifting of the parking locations would help. There was a discussion of garage locations. Mr. Fontecchio said that the goal is to unify the plan, even with the site's many constraints. Ms. Engustian suggested that the architects meet the following week to discuss this issue.

Mr. Carter discussed the site's landscaping. He has replaced Gates Leighton/Beta Engineering as the project's landscape architect. There is a significant pedestrian stair on the steep embankment (30' change in elevation) that will serve as a formal way to move down to the water. There are pragmatic pedestrian connections between the site and WD. The changes in landscaping responded to site changes and tried to stay true to original plans: same plant palate, same density. Stormwater also changed from bio-retention to sand filters because of ease of maintenance: the plantings will be a salt-tolerant grass mix that will enable the removal of trash and invasive plants.

Mr. Torrado stated that it seemed very difficult to get from an ADA parking spot down to the waterfront: it is complex.

Ms. Banner from Municap (for the developer) discussed the updated fiscal impact analysis of the project. Assessed value for the project has decreased but the tax rate rose, so there is almost no change. Public improvements must be completed. The first series of bonds will be issued in 2017. The total cost of the project is approximately \$150 million just for raw construction. Mr. Gregory stated that he is satisfied with the Fiscal Impact Study.

3. Adjournment

VOTE: A motion was made to close the DRC meeting: the motion was seconded and unanimously approved, without discussion.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06PM.

Respectfully submitted,

JEANNE M. BOYLE
Executive Director

JMB/RG