



## EAST PROVIDENCE WATERFRONT SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT COMMISSION

### Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes- December 16, 2014

*DRC* John Gregory, DRC Chairman  
*Members:* Jeanne Boyle, Executive Director

*Staff:* Roberta Groch, AICP- Planner

*Consultants:* Glen Fontecchio, Architectural Consultant  
Sara Bradford, Landscape Architect/Consultant

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Chairman Gregory called the meeting to order at 1:05PM.

#### **1. Design workshop- Village on the Waterfront development project**

481 Veteran's Memorial Parkway

Owner and Applicant: Chevron Land and Development Company

Developer: 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: Mr. Michael Hennessey, Chief Operating Officer of Village on the Waterfront LLC; Mr. Audie Osgood and Mr. Kevin Demers of DiPrete Engineering; and Mr. Jay Szymanski of The Architectural Team (TAT).

Mr. Hennessey recapped the project based on the comments that the team received from the DRC the previous week. The demise of the RIDOT land swap and P&W's lack of interest in the swap necessitated the removal of the townhomes along Waterfront Drive (WD) in the southern portion of the site, along the water. Recent market studies supported rental, not condominiums. .

Mr. Fontecchio thanked the team for the work they have done in response to the DRC's comments from several months ago. He stated that he has no issues around plaza and hopes that there can be pedestrian activity at commercial area. Mr. Fontecchio's biggest concern is the southern end of WD: Ms. Bradford agreed. The connection from the plaza to WD is poor; the team needs to change the sweep of the roundabout of the southern so that the building there does not feel isolated. The team worked on a better sweep and location for the roundabout so that it still functions but it is more connected to Building 6 and the roads. Mr. Fontecchio said that the grading and geometry makes it feel like a "no man's land": he suggested changing the roadway parking to parallel parking and adding street trees. Mr. Gregory agreed but is concerned with looping around the site if someone takes a wrong turn: it is not a good traffic pattern. There was a discussion about the Fire Department: the Fire Chief likes the new design but he is concerned about back-outs from parking, and also parallel parking.

Mr. Fontecchio and Ms. Bradford were concerned about the relationship of the site to WD: the long slopes should be broken up into outdoor rooms with walls and terraces that refer to each other and help

define the space. There was a discussion about how to make the connections back and forth by strengthening the overlook and adding a few more bump-outs. The design needs to provide better ways for pedestrians to get down and enjoy as the open space as an experience that is open to the Bay. The area can serve as a gathering place for different groups of people: i.e., 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks but also a few people having a picnic. Flattening out the space of main lawn will make it usable and defined. Another staircase down to mirror the existing will create circulation around the main lawn. Mr. Hennessey stated that they tried to minimize the number and impact of walls throughout the site.

There was a discussion about changing the ADA spots to improve accessibility to the waterfront. The route cannot be shortened due to the grade in that area. There was a discussion about the breezeway through Building 2, which is now is open towards the water and to walking paths. Moving the crosswalk at the roundabout by Building 2 would make the area more pedestrian-friendly. Mr. Fontecchio and Ms. Bradford felt that the area around Building 2 needs an entrance on the street.

Ms. Bradford and Mr. Fontecchio are concerned that all of the buildings are now on the same level and are the same height. Is there potential for some taller buildings? Make it look more urban? Maybe have part of one building have an extra story? A two story townhome on the end unit would add visual interest. Roof deck or feature would work as well.

Ms. Bradford stated that she has never been quite sure how the rest of the site relates to the boathouse: the two staircases will help with that. There was a discussion about boathouse, with storage down below for kayaks. Perhaps there will be a large upper floor as rental space for events. There has been no interest from restaurateurs in such an isolated building. How to interact with the 250,000 people/year who use the Bike Path? There was also a discussion about the gym.

The group discussed the relationship of the buildings in Phase 3 to each other and the site. Ms. Bradford is concerned about how pedestrian will get to VMP, given the slope. Mr. Hennessey said that there is driveway that exists now off of VMP that could be made a more formal pedestrian way. The goal is to integrate development with the existing community. Phase 3 will be constructed in approximately 2020-21. The project will possibly go vertical in 2016.

WD must be constructed before Phase 2, according to the past DRC approval. In Phase 1, it will be usable by emergency vehicles to connect to the Phase 1 parking area. Phase 2 would push it north but possibly with a temporary turnaround. It all comes down to how quickly Phase 1 can be occupied. Mr. Gregory asked what happens if the development is not a success and WD is never constructed? The Waterfront Commission does not want to disappoint the public. Mr. Hennessey stated that Chevron is extremely committed to this project/: the site is a major priority for them and they will do what is necessary to make it work. They want it to be a trademark for Chevron.

## **2. Adjournment**

The workshop was adjourned at 2:36PM.

Respectfully submitted,

JEANNE M. BOYLE  
*Executive Director*

JMB/RG