

## **Hunting Terrace Stakeholders Group Meeting**

Thursday, August 24, 2006

Room 2000, City Hall

7:00 p.m.

### *Introduction*

James Hartmann, the City Manager, commenced the first meeting of the Hunting Terrace Stakeholders Group by welcoming the attendees. He introduced John Komoroske, Vice Chair of the Planning Commission and the appointed leader of the Stakeholders Group, to provide further introduction. Mr. Komoroske welcomed the attendees and indicated that the Stakeholders Group was established to obtain as much input from the community as possible. Mr. Komoroske clarified that the role of the group was primarily to provide ideas, information, and opinions to City staff, rather than create a report or vote on the information presented. Mr. Komoroske established one ground rule for the group that only one person speaks at a time. He then invited the stakeholder group members to introduce themselves.

### *Staff Presentation*

After the stakeholder introductions, City staff provided a brief Power Point presentation on the history and context of the Hunting Terrace site. The Hunting Terrace site is located on S. Washington Street, just south of the Capital Beltway. In addition to its location on S. Washington Street, the site is also located within the Old and Historic Alexandria District. As a result of its location, the site is subject to the requirements of a number of adopted City plans, standards and guidelines, including the Hunting Creek Area Plan, the Washington Street Standards, the historic district, development standards under the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and current zoning.

The City received a development concept plan for the site, which would require a zoning text amendment or other regulatory change to increase the height permitted. In order to retain affordable and workforce housing, the Hunting Creek Plan provides that the City may consider a zoning text amendment to allow additional height and density, in conformance with the Washington Street Standards and with an approved special use permit, if the project provides “extraordinary” affordable housing.

After providing a brief review of the site context and current status, City staff described the design principles advocated in all development proposals and projects. These principles included: underground parking; building breaks; appropriate height, scale, and transitions; ground level open space; street grids; high quality building design; and compatibility with the design of Washington Street. In addition to describing these design principles, City staff also outlined the planning principles established for the site in the Hunting Creek Area Plan. These planning principles included: creating and preserving neighborhoods; honoring the historic character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway; providing alternative modes of transportation; preserving affordable and workforce housing; and protecting the natural environment.

City staff then provided further site-specific information including the current zoning and the context of the site. The site is located in the RC/High Density Apartment Zone, which permits a maximum floor area ratio of 1.25, a minimum open space requirement of 40%, and specific parking requirements. Its location in the Old and Historic District brings a 50 foot height limit. It is located near the newly constructed urban deck and adjacent to Hunting Creek. The site is visible from all angles, including east- and west-bound on the Capital Beltway, westbound on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, from the Lee Center, and other areas north of the Beltway, and from the George Washington Parkway and Belle Haven Park and Country Club.

To conclude the presentation, City staff provided an overview of the early concept plan submitted by the developer, which proposed raised open space, a lack of building breaks, above grade parking, and building heights beyond those permitted in the zoning ordinance and height district. Comments were provided to the developer after the early concept plan was reviewed. The Stakeholders Group was formed to provide input for consideration by the Planning Commission in the redevelopment of the Hunting Terrace site.

#### *Developer Presentation*

Mr. Giuseppe Cecchi, the president of the IDI Group Companies (IDI) and co-owner of the Hunting Terrace property with Kay Management, described the development proposed for the site. Mr. Cecchi began by stating that he saw an opportunity to preserve a significant amount of affordable and work-force housing on the site, as he recognizes the loss of such housing throughout the City. Originally the proposal included both Hunting Terrace and Hunting Towers, an adjacent property, as both properties were for sale. The Virginia Department of Transportation, the property owner at the time, withdrew the sale offer for Hunting Towers, but IDI and Kay Management purchased the Hunting Terrace site. As a result of the sale withdrawal, IDI was unable to purchase both sites, and the development proposal was altered to include only the Hunting Terrace site.

As previously mentioned, an early concept plan was submitted for an initial review by the City. IDI has revised their proposal to address the initial comments received. According to Mr. Cecchi, the main comments received were as follows: a lack of underground parking, a lack of open space at the ground level, no street grid, a lack of conformity with Washington Street Guidelines, and a recommended relocation of taller buildings to the rear of the site, and to include building breaks.

In response to these comments, the revised proposal consists of three 50-foot buildings along Washington Street, with an 80-foot setback. The site has been divided into two city blocks, which run parallel to Washington Street. On the rear block, IDI is proposing to construct high-rise condominiums, which would fund the proposed work-force housing. The condominiums would step up to a maximum height of approximately 14 stories, or approximately 140 feet in height. Two levels of underground parking would

also be located on the site. A total of 416 units are proposed for the site: 300 units in condominiums and 116 units of workforce housing.

*Questions and comments from stakeholders and participants*

**Question:** Is it possible to provide the height above sea level for Hunting Towers, Porto Vecchio, and the proposed development?

**Response:** Mr. Cecchi indicated that he would provide this information.

**Question:** How does the City measure elevation with all of the topography changes that have occurred as a result of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge expansion?

**Response:** The applicant first establishes an average finished grade, which is defined as “the elevation obtained by averaging the ground surface elevation at intervals of 20 feet at the perimeter of a building.” The height is then measured from the average finished grade to the highest point of the building, or the midpoint between the eaves and the ridge.

**Question:** Is it possible to see a long-distance view from the South, as well as a three-dimensional model of substantial size in order to fully comprehend the site and the proposal?

**Response:** Normally a physical model is created later when there is some certainty on the specifics of the development. Computer modeling could be done.

**Question:** What can be developed by right?

**Response:** City staff will provide additional graphics to illustrate the by-right development. It may be difficult to achieve the 1.25 FAR and meet the open space requirements within the 50 foot height limit.

**Question:** Have studies been completed to determine that underground parking is possible?

**Response:** Mr. Cecchi indicated that the engineers have conducted a study to determine whether underground parking is possible. They have concluded that it is possible.

**Question:** What is the vehicle for affordable housing?

**Response:** The 116 affordable / workforce housing units will be under the Condominium Association. These units will be offered to residents displaced from the demolition of the Terrace, and then to the City’s workforce.

- Question:** What is “affordable?” How will we make things stay affordable?
- Response:** There will be restrictions placed on the units at the time of sale. The amount for which units can be sold will be restricted, possibly as long as 30 years. The owner will receive some appreciation, but it will be limited.
- Question:** Will all presentations be available to the Stakeholders or posted on the website?
- Response:** The City will make the presentation available on the City’s website. City staff will also attempt to obtain renderings and elevations as available from the developer for posting.
- Question:** Is it possible to provide an image of the front of the proposed development (view of the site from Washington Street)?
- Question:** Porto Vecchio overwhelms the entrance to the City. What were the standards when this was approved?
- Response:** The City will provide this information at a subsequent meeting.
- Comment:** A member of the public urged the Stakeholders Group to remember that this is a Gateway to the City of Alexandria.
- Question:** Is the height of the Hunting Towers development grandfathered? If the Towers were to be demolished and then redeveloped, what height restrictions would apply?
- Response:** The City will provide a handout on non-complying structures at a subsequent meeting. The City will also provide a presentation on Hunting Towers at a subsequent meeting.
- Comment:** The previous plan for this site, which included both Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace, was to preserve the two Hunting Towers structures and thereby retain the existing 530 units as the extraordinary affordable housing contribution. This plan provides substantially less affordable housing. Are 116 units considered an “extraordinary” amount of affordable housing? The affordable / workforce housing units should be deeded to the City in order to keep all 500 plus units affordable.
- Comment:** Please discuss the location of the noise walls in relation to the property. The noise walls have a dramatic affect.
- Comment:** An audience member encouraged the Stakeholders Group to consider that this land is a gateway to the City. The opinion of the audience member was that while affordable housing is essential, these towers are not the proper approach. Washington Street Standards are about architecture.

- Comment:** We do have a shortage of affordable housing, but we have a serious shortage of rental units. Affordable housing has been connected to this specific development proposal without considering other options.
- Comment:** With regard to underground parking, the impact of changing the hydrology in this area must be evaluated.
- Response:** Engineers have indicated that the underground parking was feasible. Mr. Cecchi will develop a report on the underground parking and make hydrology information available.
- Comment:** The Stakeholders Group needs additional information on the Resource Protection Area (RPA) and the environmental constraints. It also may be beneficial to consider green building at this site to reduce environmental impacts.
- Comment:** In the Hunting Creek Area Plan, a cross section illustration shows Hunting Terrace as being lower than the elevation of Washington Street. The site illustrations shown at this meeting imply that the buildings will be taller than 140 feet. The illustrations must be very detailed and demonstrate the grades, elevations, and other features.
- Comment:** An attendee reminded the Stakeholder Group that the property is in the historic district. According to the attendee, the first priority should be to preserve historic heritage and the second priority should be to preserve affordable housing.
- Response:** A member of the Stakeholder Group stated that the historic aspect must walk hand-in-hand with people.
- Question:** What percentage of housing is affordable? Is there a map of the City that illustrates the locations of affordable housing?
- Response:** City staff will provide this information at a subsequent meeting.
- Question:** If this is a private development that does not leverage public funds, can these units remain affordable?
- Response:** Non-profit organizations can get involved to ensure that the units remain affordable.
- Comment:** A member of the Stakeholder Group suggested that the group enact a Community Benefit Agreement to ensure that all parties are satisfied.
- Question:** Where is the historic district?

**Response:** City staff will provide additional detail at a subsequent meeting.

**Comment:** An attendee raised a concern regarding the segregation of the affordable housing as separate structures and a separate part of the project.

### *Conclusion*

In closing, Mr. Komoroske reminded the stakeholders that they are representing a group. He urged the stakeholders to meet with the citizens that they are representing to obtain feedback. In response, a member of the Stakeholder Group indicated that dates and agendas are needed in advance in order to formulate questions and concerns as well as to notify the group that they represent.

### *Next Steps for City Staff*

- Post meeting notes, presentations, and renderings on the City website.
- Provide additional information and graphics to illustrate by-right development on the site.
- Describe the standards and zoning in place when Porto Vecchio and Hunting Towers were developed.
- Provide a handout on non-complying structures.
- Provide a presentation on Hunting Towers.
- Provide additional information on environmental constraints and the Resource Protection Area.
- Provide a map that illustrates the locations of affordable housing throughout the City.
- Provide additional detail on the location and boundaries of the historic district.

### *Next Steps for IDI*

- Provide the height above sea level for Hunting Towers, Porto Vecchio, and the proposed development.
- Provide a long-distance view of the site from the south, as well as a three-dimensional model of substantial size.
- Provide an image of the view from the front of the proposed development (site as seen from S. Washington Street).
- Provide a report on the feasibility of underground parking.

### *Next Steps for National Park Service*

- Provide a “History of Washington Street” presentation for the Stakeholders Group.

Stakeholders

James Mercury  
Lewis Simon  
Charles Benagh  
Caroline Faiella  
Maurice Barboza  
Ardith Dentzer  
Colleen O'Shea  
"Van" Van Fleet  
Lillie Finklea  
Maureen Dugan  
Boyd Walker  
Lee Weber  
Kerry-Ann Powell  
Nancy Carson  
Herb Cooper-Levy  
Ann Glennon  
Holly Hemphill  
Marguerite Lang  
David Murphy  
Sean McCabe

John Komoroske

Other Attendees

Mayor Euille  
Del Pepper  
Paul Smedberg  
Cyndy Kaufman  
Maria T. Wildes  
Jim Lamb  
William G. Thomas  
Ed Braswell  
Poul Hertel  
Katy Cannady  
Linda Couture  
Ann Kapp  
Douglas Thurman  
Teresa Miller  
Julie Crenshaw Van  
Fleet  
Van Van Fleet  
Carlos Cecchi

John Cecchi

Giuseppe Cecchi  
Howard Middleton

Staff

James Hartmann  
Mark Jinks  
Eileen Fogarty  
Rich Josephson  
Jeffrey Farnar  
Kathleen Beeton  
Tom Canfield  
Pat Mann  
Stephen Milone  
Jessica Ryan  
Gary Wagner  
Lee Webb  
Mildrilyn Davis  
Helen McIlvane  
Melodie Baron  
Shane Cochran