

**Report of the Economic Development and Zoning Committee of ANC 6A
May 16, 2012**

Present: Members: Missy Boyette, Jeff Fletcher, Dan Golden, Laura Gentile
Commissioners: Drew Ronneberg, David Holmes, Nick Alberti

Drew Ronneberg chaired the meeting.

Community Comment

There were no community comments.

Status Reports

Resolution of Previously Heard BZA/HPA Cases: No update.

Vacant Properties: No update.

Zoning Regulations Rewrite: No update.

H Street Business Liaison Report: No update.

Old Business

None.

New Business

1. R.L. Christian Library Redevelopment: Ethan Walsh, the Project Manager for the Library Redevelopment Project with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development gave a short update on the status of the project. The Deputy Mayor's Office has decided to move forward on issuing an RFP, which is currently being finalized. Mr. Walsh also met last week with Commissioners Ronneberg and Holmes to obtain community input on the project. His hope is that the RFP will be released in early June.

Mr. Walsh indicated that the site is small and that City's goal is to focus on developing it and generating tax revenue. The existing zoning and the PUD overlay will govern how it is developed. The site is 10,800 square feet in size and is in the Arts portion of the PUD overlay. It is zoned C-2A, which permits a FAR of 2.5 for residential uses and of 1.0 for all other uses. There is a maximum building height of 50 feet for the site, which can be increased an additional five feet if the first floor of the building is at least fourteen feet in height.

Based on his meeting with Commissioners Holmes and Ronneberg, DMPED has revised the draft RFP to include language regarding community preferences. Specifically, the RFP will reflect the fact that there are already a large numbers of bars and restaurants on H Street and other types of uses may be preferable for that reason. (David Holmes later clarified to Mr. Walsh that the perception was that there were enough bars and restaurants on the block where the R.L. Christian property is located and that he and Commissioner Ronneberg were not referring to H Street generally.) The RFP also will emphasize that the design of a building on the site should be contextually relevant and add to the existing sense of place and that R.L. Christian,

after whom the library building presently on the site was named, should be acknowledged in some manner in the finished project.

Going forward, Mr. Walsh will return to the Committee once submissions are received in response to the RFP. More likely than not, Mr. Walsh stated, there will be a PUD submission, which would permit an additional fifteen feet of building height.

A concern was expressed by an individual in the audience that the City should not be pursuing private development of the final piece of available public space in the H Street Corridor. Mr. Walsh responded that the site was relatively small, with minimal street frontage and that it also is a brownfields site, which would mean there would be additional costs if it were maintained as public space. Overall, the City believes that issuing an RFP for private development of the site is consistent with the original H Street overlay.

In response to the audience comment regarding public space, Drew Ronneberg emphasized that to the extent that “public use” is emphasized in the RFP in connection with the property, the intent is that a developer ultimately incorporate a public amenity into the final design, not that the entire property remain available for public use.

2. Murray’s/H Street Storage Redevelopment: Trent Smith of Insight Property Group gave a presentation on the current status of this project. Mr. Smith stated that Insight’s primary goal with this project is to “plant a flag” in the city and to have the Murray’s redevelopment be its “flagship” project. Insight currently owns the building that contains Murray’s, having purchased it with a partner. The property is subject to two leases, one for Danny’s and one for Murray’s. At least one of the leases does not expire until 2017. It is Insight’s hope that the current tenants will want out of their leases prior to that date. It is Insight’s intent to go forward with a PUD proposal for the property.

To date, Insight has held twenty to twenty-five small meetings regarding the project and has had a great response from ANC 6C. Insight is now seeking design-related feedback from ANC 6A. Insight believes that the Murray’s site is the last site remaining for large development to take place on H Street. Insight contemplates 100,000 square feet of new retail for the site and believes the project is unique in that there will be two developers on opposite sides of this block of H Street working together to develop their respective properties.

Insight has hired Street Sense and the Eisen Group to discuss potential uses for the property. It contemplates two phases to the project. The first phase of the project will be to develop the Murray’s property. Insight is asking in its PUD application for zoning relief for the property that would permit two additional floors of height (consistent with the H Street overlay) and for the alley behind the property to be closed. With respect to the proposed alley closure, Mr. Smith noted that the alley presently only serves three townhouses, with only one of those townhouses actually utilizing it. The alley is also difficult to use as it presently exists. Following the proposed alley closure, Insight proposes that a new alley be created with a permanent public easement.

The property is currently zoned C-2-B in the front and R-4 in the back. Consistent with the R-4 zoned portion of the building, the proposed structure on the Murray’s site would be eight stories tall in the front, six in the middle, and four at the back. Insight contemplates that the building would house 350 multi-family units and 100,000 square feet of rental space. Insight

also plans to have the entire frontage of the building pulled back five to ten feet from the street for better pedestrian usage of the space.

The second planned phase of the project involves the adjoining H Street Self-Storage building. Insight has not acquired this building but will do so contingent on having its PUD application approved. The Self-Storage building would be converted to house 150 multi-family units and 50,000 square feet of rental space. Insight is currently contemplating having a high-quality health club as a tenant in the space and seeking a potential pool or other outdoor use on the roof. If Insight cannot secure a desirable health club as a tenant, it would use the space either as rental or potentially for a hotel. Insight has been approached by a hotel regarding the space, however, Insight would like for any hotel tenant to be very exclusive and not a standard-flag chain hotel.

The timeline for development is to-be-determined and depends what occurs with respect to the existing leases. Insight has done a transportation study on the project and hopes to make its PUD application this summer. It currently anticipates spending \$160 million to develop the two properties.

Sketches of the proposed project were presented by Insight to the Committee. The Committee discussed the sketches and agreed to provide organized feedback on the design to Insight subsequent to the meeting.

3. 1001 H Street (Ben's Chili Bowl): Representatives of Ben's Chili Bowl were present to share new renderings of their proposed restaurant at 1001 H Street. The Committee reacted positively to the proposed drawings. There was discussion regarding the windows, including their size and location, and the representatives from Ben's Chili Bowl indicated that they would bring their architectural representative to the next meeting of the Committee to further discuss their plans for the property.

4. BZA #18373 (1326 H Street: Atlas Vet): Dr. Miller of Atlas Vet was present to seek a special exception from the requirement that there be six parking spaces for the property in question. He indicated that his staff is local and would not be driving and that he expected a significant amount of walk-in business. Because the Committee had not yet received copies of his application, the item was placed on the consent calendar. It is scheduled to be before the BZA on July 10.

5. 1400 Maryland Avenue: The building permits that were recently issued to construct a gasoline service station on this site were discussed. Potential objections to the permits were identified, including the fact that the permits as issued do not contemplate closure of the median on Maryland Avenue, which would be in violation of the BZA order approving the project, the fact that DC law requires that building permits be issued within six months of an application (although this would appear to be a requirement that protects, not restricts, the developer), and a potential challenge to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the site on the same grounds that the issuance of the building permits was challenged (namely, that the BZA order under which it would be issued is only valid for a two-year period).

The Committee voted 5-0 to support a recommendation that: 1) the ANC write a letter to the developer, indicating that it will appeal the issuance of the building permits; and 2) that the ANC formally object or support the objections of others to the issuance of the permits.

Additional Community Comment

None.

**Next Scheduled ED&Z Committee Meeting:
Wednesday, June 20, 2012
7-9 PM
640 10th St NE
Sherwood Recreation Center, 2nd Floor**