

Blessed Sacrament CAC  
Monday, July 24, 2006  
**DRAFT** Notes

**CAC Members Present:** Rafael Benzan, Clara Garcia, Fernando Mercedes, Damaris Pimentel, Michael Reiskind, Jennifer Spencer, Carmen Velazquez, Sylvia Villar, Ashley Cotton, BRA: Ines Soto, Randi Lathrop, Jonathan Greeley, Michael Cannizzo, Lance Campbell; Councilor John Tobin; ONS, Leslie Delaney-Hawkins, Office of Rep. Sanchez: Andrea Martinez, JPND: Lizbeth Heyer, Richard Thal, Kalila Barnett, Maria ? New Atlantic Corp.: Peter Roth

**Welcome and Introductions:** Ines Soto (BRA) welcomed the group and introductions of the CAC, BRA staff, and development team. The first part of the meeting allowed the development team to respond to questions from the CAC. The second part of the meeting focused on a CAC discussion with City/BRA staff.

**Review/Discussion of CAC Questions:**

*Project Integration:*

Lizbeth (JPND) addressed the issue of integration and stated that it is very difficult to accomplish on this site with the restrictions on affordable housing funding. This is even more difficult with the limited-equity co-ops. The city and state evaluate the overall cost of affordable ownership units before they determine whether the unit is eligible for a subsidy. The affordable units in the Church are prohibitive due to high rehabilitation costs and are not eligible for subsidy. The development team shared the CAC's frustration on this issue.

In terms on rental units, the convent/SROs works very well from a funding standpoint. The Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LINTC) used in the mixed-use building have restrictions that might make it difficult to put any market rate units there. The team would like to emphasize that while comprised of different buildings, they view this project as a campus.

Michael Reisking (CAC) stated that the background provided by the DND reflected some of these issues and indicated that the overall financial plan of the project was sound. He does have issue with the four affordable Church units and strongly feels that they should be part of the project.

Lizbeth (JPND) responded that the team recognizes this. Unfortunately, public agencies do not like to fund any high cost per-unit projects. The funding that the team is asking for is not unreasonable, but the policy does not take this into account.

Clara Garcia (CAC) stated that this is a political issue when it comes to the makeup and segregation of the community.

Peter Roth (NADC) suggested the CAC take this issue up with the city DND department and contact Sheila Dillon. This department has final say on the funding.

Clara (CAC) asked if there were other possible funding sources. Pater (NADC) replied that all state funds require a local match, showing city commitment. In addition, the state evaluates these programs statewide, but unfortunately development costs in Boston are significantly higher than elsewhere in the state.

Ashley Cotton (CAC) asked if former Blessed Sacrament parishioners would have any kind of priority to live in the Church. Peter (NADC) stated that this is a policy advocacy question. The

project is not asking for extra money, but is blocked by the higher per-unit cost of the affordable Church units.

Lizbeth (JPNDC) added that the CAC could certainly highlight this issue in a letter. The team is looking to engage in a further discussion. Peter (NADC) added that they share the CAC's concerns on this issue.

Carmen Velazquez (CAC) asked if the team has considered private funds. Peter (NADC) stated that they are hard to find. City and state funds are much more likely sources.

Lizbeth (JPNDC) stated that the total amount of subsidy needed is \$400,000.

Jennifer Spencer (CAC) asked what would have to happen in the rest of the project to make the Church units work. Peter (NADC) replied that a possibility would be to further subsidize the units internally. A possibility would be to increase the number of units to decrease the overall, but that is unlikely to work.

Jennifer (CAC) asked if there are other parts of the site could be leveraged, such as the Cheverus. Peter (NADC) replied that they have evenly distributed the acquisition cost among the other parts of the site so that the Church carries no debt. Lizbeth (JPNDC) stated that they do not want to increase the overall cost of the Church because as currently situated, the Church development breaks even.

Rafael Benzan (CAC) asked that unless the city changes its stance, the Church affordable units would not happen? Peter (NADC) stated that if the city makes an exception, then it would work.

Councilor Tobin asked if this has happened in the past. Peter (NADC) replied that there have been exceptions. The team has suggested looking at the average cost of developing units across the site and this puts the numbers at more acceptable levels. This would still not change the different funding restraints for the buildings. It is also important to remember that the building segregation reflects how different levels of affordability are throughout the city.

Lizbeth (JPNDC) stated that she shares the CAC frustration and understands Ashley's point. At the same time, they have run up against a wall on this issue.

Rafael (CAC) asked about the community room and ensuring that all are welcome. Lizbeth (JPNDC) stated that the community space will be a separate condo with a ground lease. Peter (NADC) added that the ground lease has built-in constraints to regulate that all aspects of the project are used correctly.

Ines (BRA) shifted the discussion to the use of the Cheverus School.

*Cheverus:*

The team has identified the three possible uses for the school as housing, office, or educational. At the CAC's request, childcare was examined and has been added to the overall use matrix. He also addressed the idea of elderly housing in that space. Essentially, the building is too small and lacks the density to make it feasible. Additionally, there is no easy common space and these types of developments usually require 30% of the overall space to be dedicated to "support space". Finally, as a result of a recently completed project, there does not seem to be the market demand for that type of housing currently.

A memo on the childcare possibility was distributed and Maria (JPNDC) briefed the group on her findings. After much discussion with local funders and practitioners, it was determined that a successful daycare center would need between 50-100 children and 5-8,000 square feet of space. Additionally, typically an outdoor area of 3-4,000 square feet of open space is also required. As daycare is funded primarily through vouchers, it is very difficult for providers to pay the same level of rent as office space. Also significant improvements would have to be made to prepare the site to operate in this manner. Peter (NADC) added that daycare usually pays \$6-10/square foot while office is \$12-18/square foot. This is a significant difference. Some small grants are available, but overall funding is limited.

Maria (JPNDC) also added that due to the city considering more and more pre-K programs, much of this is up in the air.

Ashley (CAC) if the Cheverus is used as office space, how will families be accommodated on this site? Peter (NADC) replied that the parents would access current programs in the neighborhood. The question becomes is their capacity within the community.

Lance Campbell (BRA) stated that typically a developer has a full plan in place by this point in the process, making this a unique conversation.

Richard (JPNDC) suggested that since JPNDC runs several childcare training workshops, the project could encourage some of these individuals to apply for units at the site and be able to provide daycare options as at-home providers.

Peter (NADC) explained the Impact Assessment of Alternative Uses of the Cheverus.

Damaris Pimentel (CAC) suggested that as childcare does not seem like a viable option, the it be removed from discussion.

Clara (CAC) agreed but it should be recognized that this issue was discussed.

Lizbeth (JPNDC) said they would take childcare out, but wanted feedback on the other three possible uses. The team prefers office space.

Lance (BRA) felt that this should be presented as the preferred use, not debated. Lizbeth (JPNDC) would really like that to be part of the process. Ines (BRA) added that this was a chance for the CAC to add their opinions to the conversation.

*Convent/SRO:*

Lizbeth (JPNDC) said that due to funding, the convent would not be resold before development. The projects description is in the response to the CAC questions and that all usage issues will be included in the ground lease.

Michael (CAC) asked if the CAC would be able to view the ground lease. Peter (NADC) replied that the lease is a legal document and the actual lease would probably not be shared. But the terms of the lease could be.

Micahel (CAC) asked how long the lease would be for that part of the project. Peter (NADC) stated that they started with a 99-year lease, but it has changed to the same term as the expiring use, which is 40 years with a series of voluntary extensions with the city.

Michael (CAC) asked if the Pine Street Inn would be choosing the tenants and could the use be switched. For example, could it be turned into a methadone clinic? Peter (NADC) replied that use restrictions would be built into the lease ensuring that could not happen. Lizbeth (JPND) added that all residents have to be sober and pass a CORI check. Also, people are evicted if there are issues. There is 24-hour case management.

Rafael (CAC) suggested that the CAC turn to the BRA for guidance on the lease issue to make assurances that the uses will not change 15 years down the road.

Ines (BRA) stated that the Compliance Department of the BRA can help explain this process to the CAC.

Lizbeth (JPND) also stated that it is the teams intention to involve the community in the creation of good leases and that they would set up a "ground lease organization" who will examine the leases.

Peter (NADC) stated that the co-operation agreement created after project approval will be a legally binding document that the BRA Compliance Department can enforce. If there are any changes down the road, it would have to go before the BRA Board. Also, the funding mechanisms have restrictions.

Lance (BRA) stated that all documents that go before the BRA Board are public.

#### *Zoning and Design:*

Lizbeth (JPND) stated that the size and footprint of the mixed-use building are affected by the use of the LIHTC funding. The team feels that the 36 units work financially with a nice footprint at a reasonable height. It is also not higher than the current rectory.

Also, moving to more 3-bedroom units would not work because of the way the funding works. The subsidy does not vary for unit size, so the bigger the unit, the lease value the subsidy has. Also, BRA market research shows that the greatest need is for 2-bedroom affordable units.

Richard (JPND) stated that the massing was originally intended to be 5 stories, but it has been reduced to 4 with 3 stories along Creighton Street.

Peter (NADC) addressed the servicing of the building and the internal trash system. Trash will be picked up at the rear of the mixed-use building. Transport consultants looked at the traffic issues on Creighton Street and this will work traffic-wise. All retail deliveries will come in the rear parking area.

Damaris (CAC) asked if the trucks would back into the facility. Peter (NADC) stated that retailers would have to work on this with their suppliers to let them know.

Carmen (CAC) asked how they would make the turn. Peter (NADC) replied that there is an 18-foot curb cut and parking on only 1 side of the street. Also, the retail will be small with the

largest space being 7,000 square feet. Ines (BRA) suggested further discussion on this issue at next Monday's meeting.

Carmen (CAC) asked about unit size. Peter (NADC) replied that this would present a feasibility issue.

Fernando Mercedes (CAC) asked about housing versus retail on the first floor to help the finances of the project. Peter (NADC) replied that this is an issue because the retail units are necessary to generate revenue for the project.

Jennifer (CAC) discussed the mixed-use building setback and was curious how different it was from the rectory's current situation. Peter (NADC) replied that the rectory "step back" was intended to create an active sidewalk.

Fernando (CAC) asked if housing replaced retail how many units could fit there. Peter (NADC) said that maybe 5 units could be added to the building.

Rafael (CAC) asked if by doing this might the process be going back on the issue of reducing the overall number of housing units on the site. Isn't this going back on previous work?

Sylvia Villar (CAC) asked about affordable units.

Ines (BRA) wrapped up the JNPDC piece of the meeting.

Rafael (CAC) asked for more meeting space and more table and chairs for future meetings. He also suggested a good sound system for the public meeting.

#### **CAC Discussion with City/BRA Staff:**

Jennifer (CAC) felt that the CAC needs to have discussion on its own.

Damaris (CAC) felt that the CAC is not getting anywhere and that they are discussing issues previously discussed. Also, some issues cannot be determined by the group.

Lance (BRA) felt that this was a good point and that the CAC is part of a larger process. The BRA has extensive experience with many of these issues on these types of projects.

Ines (BRA) stated that the CAC needs to discuss how they make decisions and function as a group. Clara (CAC) agreed and that the group needs to get on the same page.

Jennifer (CAC) agreed. She felt that she looked to the BRA to run the meetings, but we should not necessarily be doing that.

Ines (BRA) stated that the meeting agendas have been based on discussion. Also when questions have been asked, they have been shared with the group. The CAC also needs to decide how they would like to sit at the 7/26 meeting.

Lance (BRA) asked if they would like to sit as a group or anonymously.

Jennifer (CAC) felt it was important to show unity.

Lance (BRA) stated that he would run the meeting and discuss the important Article 80 points. The developer will do a 15-minute presentation. Randi Lathrop (BRA) said they would have the developer bring an executive summary of the project. She added that it was also important for the Ines to highlight the CAC process so far.

Rafael (CAC) asked how long these meeting typically go. Lance (BRA) replied that he would try to give as many people a chance to talk as possible. He will use a public sign-in sheet to control the meeting.

Rafael (CAC) asked about the P.A. system. Lance (BRA) replied that he would let the developer know about the CAC's concerns.

Clara (CAC) suggested front row seating for the CAC.

Ines (BRA) asked about the Q/A with the developer.

Jennifer (CAC) asked about the programming with the Compass School and the long-term viability of their program. Ines (BRA) asked her to get those questions to the BRA to then forward to the CAC and developers for a reponse.

Michael (CAC) asked for the BRA to let the community know what types of questions and topic should be covered during the public comment period. He feels that there are limitations to the Article 80 process, especially during the summer.

Carmen (CAC) added that it is important for the community to understand the process and people would like to see a second meeting.

Lance (BRA) replied that if the public misses any issues, those issues would be flushed out by the scooping session. He also urged the CAC to wait and see how the public meeting went.

Sylvia (CAC) felt that until this point, there has been great progress, but tonight was a step back.

Randi (BRA) stated that all written comments are shared with the appropriate city departments. The departments will respond to those issues. Also, if there is a need for a second meeting, there will be one.

Rafael (CAC) suggested that each CAC member communicate any shared information with his or her constituents. This is how information will reach the community.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 31<sup>st</sup> location to be determined. The agenda will include Transportation and Zoning. Frank Johnson, BTD will join us at this meeting. The developers will join us at 7pm. The CAC requested that they meet first to go over any responses and prep for the development team.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.