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New plans include housing, single-phase construction for Cleveland Circle development

Posted by Matt Rocheleau April 10, 2012 12:16 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A developer expects to soon release revised plans to build a project in Cleveland Circle that call for constructing less commercial space, which will consist of hotel, retail, restaurant and office uses, in order to add a housing component to the proposal.

The Boston Development Group now plans to build the project in one, 16-month-long construction phase instead of two phases, according to John Meunier, project manager for the company.

An Applebee's restaurant sits on one of the two adjacent parcels the project would encompass. The shuttered Circle Cinema occupies the other property, which straddles the Boston-Brookline border.

Both sites, which measure 2.5 acres combined, would be razed and replaced by two new buildings. One would contain a hotel with offices and ground-floor space for retail or restaurant use, according to a [letter](#) the developer filed with

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space for retail or restaurant use, according to a letter the developer filed with the Boston Redevelopment Authority about one week ago. The other building would house 82 apartments.

The project would include about 145,000 square feet of commercial space in addition to an unspecified square footage of residential space.

Meunier declined to disclose other details about the project.

“We want to present those details to the community in person,” he said.

He said the developer expects to meet with the community to unveil the latest design sometime in the next few weeks and before going forward the next step in the redevelopment authority’s public review process – filing detailed project plans.

Under previous plans, the site’s developers proposed a project highlighted by a 180-room hotel. Past project parameters also called for retail, restaurant, office and parking space, but residential had not been included in past designs.

“We significantly reduced some of the commercial aspects to add residential,” Meunier said.

And, the project was originally slated as a two-phase endeavor with the cinema site being redeveloped first and followed later by work on the restaurant site.

“Those changes are a direct result of the feedback we received from the community,” the project manager said.

Through Boston’s large project review process, the city’s redevelopment authority held a community meeting about the prior proposal last May. Then, the chief concern among residents – from Brookline, Brighton and nearby Newton – was that the development might not live up to its full potential if it were designed as two separate sites and phases instead of one. Some also said they wanted the project to include some residential use.

In June, developers cancelled development of the second, smaller site and announced they would submit a [new, one-site proposal](#) to the city after the deal to acquire the Applebee’s site at 381 Chestnut Hill Ave. [fell through](#) the month prior due to looming deadlines in the approval process and differences on the

deal's price.

But, in early November, the Boston Development Group was able to negotiate and sign a deal with a trust that owns the site.

The restaurant chain's lease expires in May 2014, but it is unclear whether the Applebee's keep operating there through the duration of its lease or move out so construction could start sooner.

The theater next door closed in 2008 after a 68-year run. The other site has addresses of 375 Chestnut Hill Ave. in Boston and 399 Chestnut Hill Ave. in Brookline.

To read more on past community meetings concerning the Brookline side of the proposed development, [click here](#) and [here](#).

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