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City sets meeting on controversial changes to development at Blessed Sacrament Church campus in JP

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The city will hold a meeting this week about changes to redevelopment plans for the Blessed Sacrament Church campus in Jamaica Plain, including a pair of new proposals that have drawn criticism because they would build a higher mix of market-rate housing – and thus a lower proportion of affordable units – than originally planned.

The meeting will reconvene the project’s citizen advisory committee, a mix of residents, business owners, and organization representatives the city appointed to review the original church campus plans that were approved six years ago.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority has set the meeting for Wednesday from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Julia Martin House on Bickford Street.

In 2004, the Archdiocese of Boston closed the Blessed Sacrament church and sold the property a year later to the nonprofit Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation and its partner New Atlantic Development

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Development Corporation and its partner New Atlantic Development. In 2006, the city, with input from the advisory committee, approved development plans for the three-acre site along Centre Street in the neighborhood's Hyde Square section.

Over the past six years, 81 housing units have been built there. All of the units constructed so far are designated as affordable housing, following the original plan agreed to in 2006 before the redevelopment broke ground.

But one new proposal calls for market-rate rental housing to be built in a 116-year-old former school building, which differs from the original agreement with the community that planned to use the building as a school or for community use.

Redevelopment authority spokeswoman Melina Schuler said that because that proposal calls for a different use than previously approved, the plans would need to go through the city's Article 80 large project public review process again to seek approval.

Another proposal for market-rate condominium units to be built inside the campus' 98-year-old church building – a city-designated landmark – has also drawn criticism recently, even though the plan largely follows the community's original plan and calls for a slightly higher proportion of affordable units and a slightly larger community space.

Schuler said that the church building proposal is only subject to a less-extensive design review, and not a full Article 80 public review process, because the approved use for housing to be built inside the church would not change.

The original plan called for the ratio of affordable housing across the entire Blessed Sacrament campus to be about 72 percent, exceeding the community's request for at least 50 percent affordable housing.

If both of the current development proposals are completed as planned, the ratio would be about 65 percent.

To read more about the latest proposals for the site, [click here](#).

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