

Your Town

search GO

< Back to front page

Text size

ALLSTON BRIGHTON, BROOKLINE, NEWTON

Cleveland Circle residents demand changes to plans for \$75m hotel, housing building

Posted by Matt Rocheleau September 21, 2012 03:59 PM

Print | Comments ()

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Dozens of Cleveland Circle area residents Thursday night implored a developer to rework a \$75 million [proposal](#) to construct a 181-room Hilton Garden Inn hotel, 82 luxury apartments and space for office, retail, restaurant and parking uses in a five-story building.

More than 100 people packed into a standing-room-only, contentious meeting at the Alexander Hamilton School in Brighton hosted by the city's redevelopment authority, which is overseeing approval of the project from the Boston side. Approval is also needed from the town of Brookline, because the project overlaps both municipalities.

The most frequent concern from the community was that the project would be too big. Others said that the proposal could make for worse area traffic and parking; that they did not like the look of the structure and some of the

ADVERTISEMENT

BostonShops »



Let the shopping begin. Get exclusive promotions and sales from your favorite retailers. And never miss a great deal again.

[SEE A SAMPLE](#) [SIGN UP NOW](#)

ALLSTON-BRIGHTON REAL ESTATE

86
Homes for sale

160
Rentals available

6
Open houses this week

0
New listings this week

ADVERTISEMENT

proposed uses; and that the building should be oriented more toward the Cleveland Circle intersection.

“It is our opinion that the project plan as submitted is so flawed that it should be rejected by the Boston Redevelopment Authority,” said Ken Stein, a resident of an adjacent luxury residential complex, whose speech concluded with resounding applause. “If allowed to proceed as submitted, it will cause irreparable damage to many parties.”

Stein and nearly two dozen other residents of the 112-unit Waterworks at Chestnut Hill condominium complex attended.

The group was there to show their unified opposition to a plan that would have hotel guests exit the proposed development by driving on an access road that cuts through the Waterworks complex, which opened five years ago.

John Meunier, project manager for the developer Boston Development Group, said that there is an existing easement, which gives the proposed development property the legal right to use that road without owning it, but that “we certainly look to working with the Waterworks community,” about the issue.

“We still have many points of difference,” Meunier said regarding the overall proposal. “But, one thing we share is our desire to work with the community to make Brighton a better place to live.”

The proposed mixed-use building would be constructed across 2.5 acres of property on two sites, replacing an existing Applebee’s restaurant on one site in Boston’s Brighton neighborhood and the abandoned Circle Cinema on the other parcel that straddles the Brighton-Brookline border.

“The developer is not being transparent about the amount of office space which is being

Brighton resident Douel Carroll said residents should be more understanding and give the developer the benefit of the doubt because Boston Development Group was willing to make and has made significant changes from its original proposal.

But, others said they’ve become skeptical of the developer and feel the company is too profit-focused.



Waiting for Twitter to feed in the latest...

[Follow other Boston.com Tweets](#) | [What is Twitter?](#)

Some argued that in making the community's desired changes from the

"I feel like we're being duped," said Ilene Solomon, a resident of Waterworks. "A lot of us moved here because it is a gateway between the suburbs and the city and we don't want a big blob there. It looks like a concrete jungle."

Ménager said that the development team is already working on a redesign of the materials used on the building, including adding more masonry, and that the developer is open to exploring ways to alleviate other concerns.

"This is an investment that is not made lightly," he said. "We've made many changes, but there are some things we can't change."

Responding to concerns regarding traffic and parking, the project manager explained that the development team's impact study on traffic is accurate.

"Obviously any new project is going to add some traffic," he said. But, "the amount of traffic we're adding is so insignificant ... We believe traffic, parking and access to and from the site will work."

Eva Webster and Mary Cronin, resident members of the city-appointed impact advisory group, said they and the other members of the advisory group are opposed to the project's site, among other concerns.

opposed to the project's size, among other aspects.

"Yes, we want development in Cleveland Circle, and yes BDG has made changes – they've made it 50 percent bigger," Cronin said. "They added more to the project."

"We want to work with this developer, but we're not getting the true story," she said.

Erico Lopez, who is overseeing the project for the Boston Redevelopment Authority, said that the impact studies and data the developer has provided will be reviewed for accuracy by the city, as is protocol.

He also aimed to assure residents that the city would take into considerations all of the community's concerns in deciding whether to ultimately approve the project. Lopez said the city may host a second public meeting.

"This is a process," he said. "This is not the end-all, be-all."

Contingent on getting approval from both Boston and Brookline officials, the developer hopes to start an 18-month construction process in spring 2013, the project manager has said.

On the Boston side, the public comment period is scheduled to close on Mon. Oct. 8, Lopez said.

Comments can be e-mailed to erico.lopez.bra@cityofboston.gov or mailed to: Erico Lopez, Boston Redevelopment Authority, One City Hall Square, 9th Floor, Boston, MA 02201.

To read prior coverage of the proposal, [click here](#).

To see a copy of the 722-page detailed project plan that was filed with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, [click here](#).

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

--

For the latest Allston-Brighton updates:

Follow [@YourAllstonBri](#) on Twitter, [here](#).

And connect via Facebook by clicking the "Like" button on the top right hand

corner of the Allston-Brighton homepage, [here](#).

◀ Previous
entry

Next entry ▶