

Your Town

search GO

< Back to front page

Text size - +

ALLSTON BRIGHTON, BROOKLINE, NEWTON

Developer again revises Cleveland Circle proposal for hotel, apartments, retail, restaurant and offices

Posted by Matt Rocheleau March 22, 2013 05:56 PM

Print | Comments ()



(Boston Development Group)

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

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



Waiting for Twitter to feed in the latest..

A developer has unveiled new plans for a proposal to build a hotel, upscale apartments, offices, and space for retail, restaurant and parking in a five-story building in Cleveland Circle.

Boston Development Group spent the past several months making a second round of revisions to the proposal it first presented nearly two years ago.

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

Approval is needed from both the city of Boston and the town of Brookline, because the project overlaps both municipalities.

Some area residents objected to prior plans. They said the project would be too big and could make local traffic and parking worse. Some did not like the building's look or proposed uses and wanted it oriented more toward the intersection.

Since then, measures have been added to the latest proposal that, according to studies, would improve traffic at the Cleveland Circle intersection, according to John Meunier, project manager for Boston Development Group.

Another one of the most significant changes was redesigning the building's exterior to try to make it match other buildings in that area. There is also more prominent signs for the building's hotel.

The edge of the building closest to the intersection has been designed so that instead of coming to right-angle like a point, the building's corner is more gradual and includes a section that faces the intersection.

In the latest plan, the building would be about 234,550 square feet, which is about 2,000 square feet smaller than the prior plan.

The proposed number of Hilton Garden Inn hotel rooms is now 196, which is 15 more than the prior plan.

The number of proposed residential units is 74, down from 80. That change is

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

The number of proposed residential units is 74, down from 82. That change in particular has allowed the developer to make the building about one story shorter along an edge that abuts Cassidy Playground.

The amount of medical office space is now 18,000 square feet, down by about 1,000 square feet. There would be 14,200 square feet of ground-floor retail and restaurant space, the same amount as previously proposed.

There would be 126 garage parking spaces and 77 other spots in a surface lot behind the building, which is 15 and 10 fewer spots, respectively.

The building's courtyard area, where vehicles enter to park or pickup and drop-off hotel guests, has been made larger.

After the latest round of changes, some residents still remain opposed to parts of the plan.

Eva Webster is a resident member of a city-appointed group to oversee and advise the planning process.

She said the building's size and density are less of a problem for her, but she does not like how the building is laid out and configured on the site.

In particular, she said the courtyard area is too-enclosed. Its "fortress"-like look hides the hotel entrance and creates windows in some apartment and hotel that look across the courtyard at each other.

Webster said other concerns remain over traffic and parking issues and the building's proximity to neighbors in Brookline.

She said there is opposition to the building having medical office space. And, she worried that people living in some of the residential units would be disrupted by noise from being close to the intersection and above the ground-floor restaurant.

"We don't oppose the project per se, but we want it to be a project that will really enhance our neighborhood," she said by phone Friday. "We are counting on this project to bring some long-term residents to this area. We all want something good to happen here."

"I don't want to sound like I'm... Webster said Brookline still has a...

“It’s just not properly designed,” Webster added. But, she still holds some hope. “It’s not so impossible to make it work,” she said.

Meunier said by phone Friday that the developer has worked to address all concerns. But, he said some parts of the project have not been changed because studies and analysis done simply show the developer’s proposal makes the most sense.

He said that city officials now support the latest proposal, including aspects that have drawn criticism in the past.

The project manager said the building’s density is consistent with most others in Cleveland Circle and some nearby buildings are more than twice as dense as the proposed project.

He also said studies show mitigation efforts proposed with the project would actually improve traffic.

The proposal calls for fixes to the operation and timing of a signal that allows MBTA trolleys to cut through part of the intersection to access a rail yard; reassigning some traffic lanes; lengthening some left-hand turn lanes and reprogramming the sequence and timing of intersection’s traffic lights, he said.

Some residents have worried previously that the projected impacts from the project – namely concerning traffic and parking – are based on flawed data and analysis.

Meunier emphasized again Friday that the development team’s impact study on traffic is accurate.

Residents of the 112-unit Waterworks at Chestnut Hill condominium complex next door have expressed opposition to a specific component of the project that would have hotel guests exit the proposed development by driving on an access road that cuts through the Waterworks complex.

An existing easement gives the proposed development property the legal right to use that road without owning it.

Meunier said Friday studies show the hotel traffic would be lighter than when the access road was used by the cinema that closed at the site in 2008, about a

year after the Waterworks complex opened. The developer is also proposing to add signage to encourage motorists to drive slowly and safely along the access road.

The project was substantially [revised once](#) already.

The developer, in line with requests from the community, changed the hotel brand, added underground parking, worked to develop the project across both sites instead of separately and replaced a large amount of office space with housing.

In the fall, following that initial round of changes, some residents said the community should give the developer the benefit of the doubt because of the significant changes made from the original proposal.

Others said they had become skeptical of the developer and felt the company is too profit-focused.

Some argued that in making the community's desired changes from the original proposal, that the project grew significantly larger.

The building would now cost the developer about \$80 million to build, about \$5 million more than prior plans, Meunier said.

Contingent on getting approval from both Boston and Brookline officials, the project would take about 18 months to build.

The developer had hoped previously to start construction by this spring 2013. Meunier said Friday that the developer now hopes to start in the fall.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority has scheduled a public meeting to discuss the latest proposal at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 3 at the Alexander Hamilton School on Strathmore Road in Brighton.

The public comment period for the approval process in Boston is scheduled to close on Tuesday, April 30.

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 see a copy of the latest proposal, a 1,230-page detailed project plan filed with the Boston Redevelopment Authority on March 13, [click here](#).

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



(Boston Development Group)

[◀ Previous entry](#)

[Next entry ▶](#)

