



Top of the Hill moving forward

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By Amanda E. Garrett
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CLEVELAND HEIGHTS City officials are moving forward with a development project at the Top of the Hill property despite the March 4 failure of the income tax increase.

Mayor Ed Kelley said the planning and development department will begin searching for a developer within 40 to 60 days.

"We've always been committed to this project whether the income tax passed or not," he said.

The search for a developer will begin with a Request for Proposals (RFPs) and a Request for Qualifications (RFQs) from architects and designers.

The RFPs would require designers and architects to submit plans for the project, while the RFQs would require the firms to submit their qualifications.

The RFPs must be based on a 43-page set of guidelines that was drawn up by the planning department and approved by the planning commission and city council.

The guidelines for the 3.5 acres of city-owned property are broken down into nine categories including open space and streetscape, sense of place and transportation.

City leaders hope the guidelines will lead to the design of a vibrant urban center.

"Here is the time to pay complete homage and reference to the wonderful Tudor architecture of Cedar Fairmount, but to also say, 'This is about something new, hopeful, cool and forward looking,' according to the introduction to the guidelines.

"We are eager to attract new audiences and retain residents who would look at it and say 'It's not your mother's Cleveland Heights.' "

Some of the specific guidelines are:

Open Space and Streetscape. The guidelines call for a mixed-use development with plenty of green space and pedestrian access.

The guidelines specify that the 3.5-acre property should be divided into two sections. The eastern portion of the land, next to Nighttown Restaurant, would be primarily used as retail space, while the western part, near the intersection of Cedar Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard, would be for residential space.

Sense of Place: The guidelines call for an innovative design project that respects the scale, proportions and quality of the historic architecture in the area, but doesn't excessively copy notable buildings like The Alcazar Hotel and the Heights Center Building.

Transportation. The guidelines call for a comfortable walking and biking environment with calm vehicle traffic. The guidelines also call for an improved connection to the RTA station in University Circle.

Sustainable Design. The guidelines call for environmentally friendly design standards for the project based on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System developed

by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The Top of the Hill site is 3.5 acres of city-owned property in the area where Cedar Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard meets Cedar Hill. The property is currently used as parking and open space.

The city completed the first phase of the project in June, when Allegro Realty Advisors, the Cleveland-based consultant firm, turned in a market analysis and feasibility study.

The study determined that a mixed use development would be the best use of the site. The site will support multi-family residential units, 20,000 to 40,000 square feet of retail or restaurant space and 10,000 to 20,000 square feet of office space, the study said.

The retail space would be on the first floor, the office space would be on the second floor and housing would be located one to three floors above that.

Contact Garrett at agarrettsun@yahoo.com or at (216) 986-5479.

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