



CH moves ahead on Top of Hill plan

Thursday, October 11, 2007

By Amanda E. Garrett
The Sun Press

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS "If we build it, will they come ?"

That question asked by Richard Wong, city director of Planning and Development is on the minds of city officials as they move to the next phase in developing the Top of the Hill property.

The site is 3.5 acres of city-owned property where Cedar Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard meet Cedar Hill. It is now used as parking and open space, but city officials are looking into building a development with housing and retail there.

Councilman Dennis Wilcox, chairman of the planning and development committee, said that although three previous development plans by the city in 1972, 1982 and 1990 never came to fruition, now is a good time to re-evaluate the site.

"It's a prime development site because of its proximity to University Circle," he said during a special meeting of the planning commission and city council Oct. 3.

"A recent economic boom in the area and an interest by developers in the site has led the city to explore the option of development."

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

The study determined that a mixed use development would be the best use of the site, Allegro Principal Michael Cantor said.

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 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.

Council and the planning commission are ready to move forward with the next phase of the project, establishing design guidelines for a possible development, Wilcox said.

The Planning Commission will establish guidelines for density, height, walkability, traffic, setback from the road and public space, which will then be sent to city council for final approval.

Before any guidelines are firmly established, city officials are holding a series of public meetings, Mayor Ed Kelley said.

"We want to get as much public input as possible," he said.

Several residents spoke out both for and against the project during the first public meeting Oct. 1

Brendan Ring, owner of Nighttown on Cedar Road, urged city officials to move forward with the development.

"The Top-of-the-Hill site is the gateway into Cleveland Heights," he said. "We need a hip, young, fun development that will bring people into the Cedar-Fairmount Business District and into Cleveland Heights."

Other residents expressed concerns about the project, citing a variety of issues that ranged from parking to a lack of green space.

Wilcox told the audience that city officials are still in the beginning stages of the project.

"No decisions have been made on what the final project will look like, whether or not we want to move forward or who the developer would be if we decide to move forward," he said.

The next public meeting on the Top of the Hill development will be 7 p.m. Nov. 7 at the Senior Center, 1 Monticello Boulevard.

For more on this story, visit www.cleveland.com/sunpress

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

© 2007 Sun Newspapers

© 2007 cleveland.com All Rights Reserved.