

CHRS on Hine Site Redevelopment

After receiving a recommendation from a special committee of the board, the board of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society voted at its June meeting to support a preference for the Hine site development proposal of Stanton-Eastbanc. A detailed letter of support will be sent to the Deputy Mayor for Development before the July 10 deadline and will be made available at www.chrs.org.

To understand the decision you must go back to early 2008. CHRS at its Feb. 19, 2008 board meeting laid out its vision of what the successful development proposal should be. This resolution was reported on the front page of the CHRS News of March 2008. The board resolution spelled out 11 criteria:

1. Comply with the recently enacted comprehensive plan,
2. Be the best example of smart growth and sustainable development,
3. Reflect the importance of the location,
4. Be compatible with the surrounding zoning and existing building scale,
5. Restore the original L'Enfant Plan by reopening C Street between Seventh and Eighth,
6. Provide for commercial uses on Seventh Street compatible with the existing commercial uses,
7. Set aside Pennsylvania Avenue for mixed use with retail on the first floor and office above,
8. Design the Eighth Street frontage as residential and include a substantial percentage of workforce housing.
9. Consider live/work studios on C Street.
10. Accommodate one to two underground levels of parking over 100 percent of the site, so there is parking for the residential, commercial and weekend parking for the Eastern Market,

11. Provide for green space as well as an outdoors areas for craft vendors, food vendors and the flea market.

The board believes that the Stanton-Eastbanc proposal most closely meets the criteria. Significantly, the proposal offers the highest LEED certification and twice the number of affordable housing units than the two next closest proposals. The mixed use of the proposal is also superior because it provides for substantially more office space thus putting more people on the street to patronize the retail and restaurants during the daytime.

Picking a developer is not the end of the process, but the beginning. The winner will have to go through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) before the Zoning Commission and will also have to get the approval of the Historic Preservation Review Board. There will be many more opportunities for public comment.

Finally, the community and the city are fortunate to have three good proposals, one of which is very good, to choose from (CHRS believes the Campus proposal is too vague to evaluate and has so advised the appropriate District officials). CHRS wants to thank all the bidders for their hard work but believes the Stanton-Eastbanc proposal best meets the criteria and, above all, will best meet the needs of the Capitol Hill community.

Richard Wolf
President
Capitol Hill Restoration Society

In Support of Street Sense

It's time for new blood. The same people have done so much for the neighborhood over the years and we appreciate all they've done. We show that appreciation by buying or renting homes here and staying put. We do not appreciate it, however, when that same group of Hill insiders uses their clout to get their way or show that they are not open to

hearing legitimate opposing views from outsiders.

Town Square is an example of such a wrong-headed idea. Last year, the community came out in large numbers, heard the plans, and in very one-sided majorities approaching a consensus, said they'd just as soon not reconfigure Pennsylvania Avenue SE into a square. Why are we still talking about this, in the face of such widespread opposition? Because a group of insiders believe they are right and the almost-unanimous voice of residents is wrong.

This is tiresome, and not something I want to go through again as Hine is demolished and rebuilt.

When it comes to choosing a Hine site developer, some say this is a done deal. Two other developers have connections to the kinds of Hill insiders who are on the board of the Town Square task force, and Street Sense does not. But leave aside the personalities, and Street Sense is the best proposal on its merits. If enough people say so, maybe their voices will be heard.

Street Sense's plans are (1) smaller than the rest, and more forward-looking in terms of discouraging driving and parking, and (2) a cut above the others in terms of using capture and re-use of rainwater and solar energy to reduce the carbon footprint of the development.

Street Sense brings the Tiger Woods Foundation programs for junior high and high school kids to the Hine site. Street Sense has identified room in their plans for consolidating Shakespeare Theater's operations at one site. Street Sense is open to developing a day care center for the under 3-year-olds.

Street Sense represents fresh, new forward-looking ideas for the next 20 or 30 years.

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Too Big! Too High!

Redevelopment of the Hine School property is the beginning of a major re-characterization of the Eastern Market neighborhood. Those of us who have been meeting with the development teams find much to like in their plans and approach to the community, some more than others, and much to dislike.

But whichever developer wins the bid, and whatever design modifications are mandated during subsequent stages of the planning process, it is increasingly clear that the site of the famous weekend flea markets will be covered by a big, probably tall building because the mayor has made maximum revenue generation the main criteria for evaluating proposals, regardless of the public language in the RFP issued last fall.

Thus three of the four proposals have almost identical footprints. Proposals include up to 237 rental apartments--a significant increase in height and population density for the neighborhood. There will be very little public open space for flea markets and community gatherings. Perhaps this kind of change is inevitable, perhaps not. Maybe readers want it, maybe not. The administration cares what people think. They have to. So let them know.

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Develop for More Than Simple Profit

The stark differences among the four bidders who have been selected as finalists for the Hine School site have intensified the debate and (for some) increased the dilemma. We are being asked to comment on the merits of the less-well-defined plan of the National Leadership Campus (a not-for-profit organization, where profits from rentals of offices, extensive garage, and apartments would be plowed back into maintaining the development and its good works) on the one side and three for-profit, commercial developers on the other.

If the decision by the mayor and other city officials will be made on purely economic grounds, then the choice will become framed only as "who benefits financially?" The neighborhood, the local commercial real estate industry, or the city coffers? However, shouldn't this precious piece of land be developed for a purpose or even for a profit-with-a-purpose, not simply for a profit?

National Leadership Campus is clearly interested in development for a purpose. Of the three commercial developers, DSF/Streetsense/Menkiti appears to have a genuine commitment to building and living green and to nurturing local businesses; many of its main partners have a history of nonprofit community involvement, and the group has a commitment from the Tiger Woods Foundation and has expressed interest in accommodating other Hill nonprofits such as the Shakespeare Theater.

A site that has historically been a place for education should not be flipped simply for the sake of short-term commercial gain alone.

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Support Street Sense

As a long-term Hill resident and supporter of local businesses, I have taken great interest in the proposals for the redevelopment of the Hine School site. After a studious review of the four finalists' proposals, I support the Street Sense proposal. This developer's proposal is sensitive to the special character of this unique neighborhood without sacrificing economic development.

I am particularly heartened by the Street Sense commitment to incubate and support local independent businesses and by its willingness to accommodate the relocation of the Shakespeare Theatre to this site.

The Street Sense proposal also envisions a plan that would draw the eye up and down the corridor from Barracks Row on Eighth Street, through the Eastern Market Metro, up to the pivot point of the commercial property at the Hine site, and up Seventh Street to Eastern Market. This is accomplished without jeopardizing the residential character of the pocket park at D Street through a rerouting of Pennsylvania Avenue. Furthermore, I appreciate this developer's willingness to work with the residents to accommodate their reasonable requests and their commitment to creating an environmentally sustainable building.

I am adamantly opposed to the Bozzuto proposal. This developer would bring in chain stores that would compete with our existing neighborhood businesses. Capitol Hill is a unique neighborhood. Putting chain stores at this crucial location would destroy everything that makes this neighborhood appealing to residents and visitors. Once the unique character of the neighborhood is gone, we've lost everything.

Bozzuto's proposal also would put commercial establishments onto currently residential Eighth Street. When a Bozzuto representative was asked whether there might be a reconsideration of the changing of the residential character of Eighth Street, he said absolutely not (however, this representative was positively inclined when a resident facetiously asked about putting a nightclub at the site). This dismissive treatment is nothing new from this developer.

No resident I have spoken with supports the Bozzuto proposal, but we have all been made aware that Bozzuto has "contacts" in the mayor's office. If this developer is selected, it will be clear that our representatives are not responsive to the will of the majority of the residents.

Both Street Sense and the Leadership Council have shown sensitivity to the interests of the residents of Capitol Hill, while the other two

developers have not. I cannot support the Stanton proposal principally because this developer seems intent on helping develop a proposal to reroute Pennsylvania Avenue past the residents of D Street. The Stanton proposal also would present a much higher-rise building than that proposed by Street Sense, which would not be in keeping with the current character of this residential neighborhood.

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Make Hine Development Kid Friendly

My favorite Saturday mornings are trekking over to Market Lunch for blue bucks with daughter Lucy, but the sale of Hine School adjacent to Eastern Market has the potential to dramatically change our neighborhood and that experience.

The city has already narrowed the proposals to four, and before they go too much further the proposals need more community scrutiny (maybe more than the three weeks we are being given by the mayor).

With the proposed development, our Saturday morning venture could mean walking by a new Banana Republic on Seventh, standing for several minutes as a stream of cars go in and out of the underground parking lot that serves the 100 new condos and 500 parking spaces, drawing even more traffic and tangling up Pennsylvania Avenue. Some of the developers have even proposed larger grocery stores that would compete with Eastern Market and primarily attract customers in cars.

Alternatively, after gobbling up the pancakes we could go hang out at the small park that is used by the new day care center during the week. We don't have to worry about more traffic because the developers have promoted transit oriented development. There are lots of stores, but the kind that are locally owned, add culture, curiosity, foot traffic, and bring more visitors to our special neighborhood.

My vision for the site is about adding to the kid friendly special quality of a historic walking community.

The city has many competing interests in this site. Without our participation and sharing our visions for the neighborhood, there is a significant chance that we end up with the schemes of well-intentioned developers who are primarily responsive to meeting a financial bottom line and despite all their pretty pictures and good intentions may end up sacrificing the livability of a unique neighborhood.

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ANC 6B on the 7th Street Weekend Closure

The question of whether the block of Seventh Street in front of the Market should be open or closed on weekends is but one of many critical issues that should be resolved as part of this comprehensive plan for the entire area. Having said that, the commission (ANC 6B) is mindful that the city is considering the further closing of this block and thus provides these comments. The commission's comments are informed in part by a range of views on the issue received from merchants, as well as interested individuals and organizations, during two successive 6B meetings (June 2 and June 9).

Our commission is committed to the success of the entire Eastern Market complex in all of its phases – including the venerable inside merchants, the vendors along the Farmers' Line outside the building, the longtime merchant shops on the east side of the street across from the market, as well as those on the west side of the 300 block of Seventh, and the arts and crafts and flea market vendors that do business there on weekends. Our commission is also focused on steps that will enhance the social, cultural and shopping experience in around this site for the immediate neighbors, the broader Capitol Hill community, our fellow city residents, and the many visitors that come to the area to shop and partake of the unique Eastern Market experience every week.

The question regarding the Eastern Market block of Seventh Street is: What disposition of the street on weekend days would most enhance success for the various categories of businesses as well as the wide variety of users, especially those from the Capitol Hill community?

In order to answer that difficult and complex question, the community needs as much hard data as can be mustered to clarify the role that the street plays--open or closed--in achieving success for all involved. Normally, when the city wishes to close a major street, there is a deliberate and sometimes extensive public process during which these data are gathered, presented and discussed. For reasons that have not been made clear, the city appears to have decided to skip over this important step and preemptively close the street on weekends by executive order. Our commission calls upon the city to reconsider its decision and instead to initiate a public review process for this street closing proposal.

One of the critical issues to resolve is whether, and the extent to which, parking immediately adjacent to the market is necessary to insure the financial viability of the many businesses involved in and around the market. Because of the lack of any reliable, current data from the city or any of the interested parties about this question, the commission feels it cannot reach a decision about the matter at this time.

If at some stage the need for adjacent parking is substantiated, a number of options should

be considered including such things as providing parking spaces along the block of Seventh Street SE in front of the market, providing parking nearby such as on the Hine School site, and other possible approaches, valet parking and/or delivery services and limited access to adjacent parking for handicapped individuals and service vehicles.

Another issue that arises with the street closure is a conflict among the store merchants, the Farmers Line, crafts vendors and pedestrians on how to appropriately share the space provided by the closed street. Steps taken by the Office of Property Management to rearrange the use of this space on June 6 appear to have resolved some if not all of these concerns.

The commission notes the many expressions of enthusiasm from Capitol Hill residents and others for the significantly improved experience provided on weekends around the market area when Seventh Street is closed. Making the area safe and indeed inviting for pedestrians of all ages is clearly a major benefit that comes from both having that block closed and the street itself used in a sensible way to bridge the flow of patrons between and among the many shopping opportunities and community activities that characterize the weekend experience in the Eastern Market area.

In summary, ANC 6B urges the city to reconsider its decision to bypass a full public discussion of the pros and cons of closing Seventh Street, and instead asks that the city immediately initiate a thorough analysis, with full community involvement, of the data and issues associated with the parking needs of the market. The commission stands ready to work with the city on this effort.

David F. Garrison
Chair, ANC 6B

Parking in Driveways

There has been a lot of anger expressed in the last two Hill Rag's "Letters to the Editor" section re: "parking in driveways." I have lived on Capitol Hill for the past 39 years, and only now is this becoming an issue. One reason for this heated discussion is probably because the city, desperate for new revenue, has brushed off an old, little known or understood law that, until now was rarely enforced. But, there is also a core group of people who have suddenly and forcefully encouraged the city to enforce that law. For years no one thought it necessary to enforce it, since not complying with it never seemed to cause a problem. That in itself says a great deal about the necessity for such a law.

Ms. Lawrence (see "You Don't Own Your Driveways," The Last Word, June Hill Rag) is correct in that cars parked in driveways take away a parking space. But what she fails to understand is that it is a zero sum game. No additional space would be opened up if people who use their driveways to park their vehicles were now to park on the street where they live. If a car parked in a

driveway also blocks a sidewalk, that should not be allowed and that car should be ticketed. But, most of the vehicles being discussed are not in that category.

As it happens, I park one of our two cars in a space that is available to me alongside (as opposed to in front of) my house and off the sidewalk. The north side of our block does not have Zone 6 parking restrictions because of a playground on that side. Our block sent a petition to the DOT to have Zone 6 parking signs put on that side of the street, but it was denied. As a result, that side of the street is used primarily by commuters and non-Zone 6 vehicles during the work week. That restricts the number of spaces available for residents who live on our block as well as for our guests. So, taking my car off the street does in fact help, and I don't think it detracts from the look of our house or the neighborhood.

I realize that living in a historic district means there are certain restrictions and standards, but having a car parked in a driveway does not seem to me to impede or alter the quality of life on the Hill or its appearance.

The city has become quite aggressive in its ticketing program, and I agree with some of it. But I hope the city backs off this type of ticketing (as long as vehicles do not impede passage on the sidewalks), and I hope it either revokes that law, modifies it, or at least ignores it as it has for so long. If it doesn't, I suspect that the lives of those who now park in their driveways, will not change much, if at all, other than loss of a nice convenience. Ms. Lawrence implies that those who park in their driveways seem to think of it as a right to do so, and she seems to be angry about that. It is basically a convenience, which contrary to the assertions made by her and Ms. Capen, does not, with very few exceptions, inconvenience anyone else. But the public comments of some disgruntled Hill residents are making it much more than that. Unfortunately, the tenor of the comments expressed in recent letters to the editor will linger, regardless of whether cars are allowed to park in driveways or not.

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