



Belfast Yards Redevelopment Goals

City of Belfast

CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP

Belfast City Hall

Tuesday, October 25th, 2022

6:00 P.M.

All City Council Meetings will be conducted online using Zoom and can be streamed on the City website at www.cityofbelfast.org.

They will air live on BEL TV.

CITY OF BELFAST

Special Meeting

1) Present: Mayor Eric Sanders, Councilor Mary Mortier, Councilor Neal Harkness, Councilor Brenda Bonneville, Councilor Michael Hurley, Councilor Paul Dean, City Manager Erin Herbig, Director of Code and Planning Bub Fournier, Economic Development Director Thomas Kittredge, Deputy Economic Development Director Greg Connors, Harbor Master Kathy Given, City Planner Jonathan Boynton, and City Communications Assistant Mackenzie Barnhart

2) Agenda:

A. COUNCIL WORK SESSION- Discussion on Belfast Yards Redevelopment Project

DRAFT initial narrative:

“The redevelopment of the Belfast Yards parcel should maximize both the sales price and the property assessed value, possibly supported by a TIF credit enhancement agreement, that maximizes both the sale price and the number of owners.

The City of Belfast would neither own nor manage this property, but rather divide the property into a business park model for purchase or lease, to best maximize the number of individual owners.

This redevelopment would be connected buildings with a limitation in maximum building height that must include green and/or outdoor space and a preference to include parking.

Its uses would include both commercial and residential uses.

Preferred commercial should include marina related industries, restaurants, and retail, with less emphasis on lodging or office space.

Residential uses would include market rate housing that is either owned or rented.”

Survey Results:

The Belfast City Council conducted a survey, ranking individual priorities under the following categories: Layout and Aesthetics, Role of the City, Financial and Ownership, Commercial Uses, and Residential Uses. Results were collected and scored based on each Councilors response using a voting method, indicating whether they supported, did not support, or were indifferent to each idea listed under the 5 categories. The results are most supported by the City Council at a maximum of +6 and least supported by the City Council at a minimum of -6. The results are scored below as follows:

Layout and Aesthetics

- Limitation on maximum building height?
 - Score: +3
- Connected buildings?
 - Score: +2
- Standalone building?
 - Score: -1
- Parking spaces included?
 - Score: +2
- Green space and/or outdoor space included?
 - Score: +6

Role of the City

- City manages building(s) and tenants?
 - Score: -5
- City issues RFP and works with selected developer(s)?
 - Score: 0
- City builds shared site for purchase or lease?
 - Score: +2
- City divides into business park for purchase or lease?
 - Score: +4
- City hires real estate agent to sell or lease?
 - Score: +1

Financial and Ownership

- Maximize the sale price?
 - Score: 0
- Maximize the assessed value?
 - Score: +5
- Provide TIF credit enhancement agreement?
 - Score: +5
- Maximize the number of owners?
 - Score: +3
- Business condominium form of ownership?
 - Score: -1

Commercial Uses

- Office space?

- Score: +5
- Retail space?
 - Score: +6
- Restaurant space?
 - Score: +6
- Hotel/lodging space?
 - Score: +5
- Marine-related space?
 - Score: +6

Residential Uses

- Market-rate rental housing?
 - Score: +5
 - Market-rate owned housing?
 - Score: +4
 - Seasonal or short-term rental housing?
 - Score: -2
 - Affordable/workforce rental housing?
 - Score: -5
 - Affordable/workforce owned housing?
 - Score: -5
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Information, Thoughts and Ideas Expressed by Belfast City Council and City Staff

- Ward 1 Councilor Mary Mortier
 - Reminded that the winter parking ban affects the idea of using the parcel as parking spaces. Citizens will not be able to utilize the area as parking during the winter.
 - Discussed that Front Street and the other buildings abutting the lot are 3 stories tall, which will prevent any new buildings from having an ocean view. There would not be much of a waterfront view even with a 4-story structure.

- Explained that the Belfast City Council opening up this project to the important people in the room for different viewpoints and perspectives, and that is a very good thing.
 - Suggested that at some point it may be a good idea to have an open listening session with the public once the Council has more structure and direction with this project. Once there is structure and direction, it would be most ideal to have the listening session as early as possible.
 - Explained that there are a lot of important, educated people who have very important input just as the Council does. These people have great care in the space and any project that goes there.
 - Reminded that on this property, the flood zone cuts diagonally across it and that is important to keep in mind when considering projects for the space.
 - Expressed that the dead wall on building 5 is not attractive, which makes a good place to put parking spaces.
 - Reminded that the section near Front Street has smaller owners spanning towards the middle of the parcel.
 - Questioned how to get access for delivery trucks/service utilities. Suggested making an access way to service the three fronts, coming from the parking side and creating a utility corridor.
 - Reminded that not all people would be coming into the parcel from the Harbor Walk. Suggested that there needs to be something attractive put in the three fronts to draw people in.
 - Reminded that the Council wanted this to be a working waterfront, something that is real and authentic. Expressed that this is still very important.
 - Reminded that the parcel land extends past Thompsons Wharf, that there is an arm that stretches out there.
 - Explained that if the Council were to sell multiple lots, that could mean looking at many different contractors trying to plan and build at the same time. Expressed that there would be too much going on to get projects done.
 - Suggested that Council establish a list of options that buyers can choose from that fit the uniqueness of Belfast.
- Ward 2 Councilor Neal Harkness
 - Discussed the Thomaston project example. Expressed that he liked that it was raised up to accommodate rising sea level.
 - Expressed that the project must have parking spaces.
 - Explained that he is open minded when it comes to the direction of the project.

- Explained that Hamilton Marine may want to purchase some of the property when the Council comes out with an idea for direction, people may want to approach us with alternative ideas when we decide that we are developing it
 - Reminded that when Council first started these discussions about the project, Council did not look into how Thompsons Wharf could contribute to the project. Expressed that it is a very important feature of the project.
 - Asked if Council should consider building something down there to enhance Thompsons Wharf?
 - Explained that the worst-case scenario is that the project has empty retail lots for 10 years, which is a bad look. Expressed that if the City builds and tries to sell, a Harbor Walk with 6 empty storefronts would put Belfast's growth back
 - Suggested that the City should sell lots for people to build on that the Council can set parameters for.
 - Explained that people may buy the spaces on the parcel as an investment to rent.
- Ward 3 Councilor Brenda Bonneville
 - Reminded that this parcel is the last waterfront parcel in Belfast. Expressed that the project needs to have community involvement.
 - Expressed that the Council needs to listen to the community and the people that are down there every day, to be inclusive of the Harbor Master, the Harbor Advisory Committee, and the community that utilizes the harbor every day.
- Mayor Eric Sanders
 - Suggested that there should be some taste in design, and that what Council decides needs to be physically attractive. Compared the space to an example in Thomaston.
 - Reminded that the redevelopment of Belfast Yards is a huge project and that it is going to take years to complete.
 - Suggested that Council needs to hone in on some aspect to get something done and perhaps send out an RFP.
 - Expressed that Council needs to come up with a consensus as a group.
 - Explained the vision of where the project starts and where it gets traction is about the attractiveness of what Council is going to put down there to gather appeal.
 - Suggested that Council should be thinking of ideas that can be given City staff for a potential RFP in two months' time.

- Explained that floodplains are very important, but someone is going to step in with a different idea every time.
- Ward 4 Councilor Michael Hurley
 - Expressed that small, private, and local is the key to success in this project.
 - Discussed the example of the lock marina in Camden. Explained that it is risen up and completely out of the floodplain.
 - Expressed that a critical part of the project should be design standards.
 - Reminded that the City used to have a big parking lot where building 6 is that was sold.
 - Suggested that Council does not want to blow off the idea of parking, but it does not need to be emphasized either.
 - Reminded that sea level rise is not just a Belfast-specific problem.
 - Suggested that the entire frontage of Steamboat Landing is a huge opportunity for a Wharf, and that Belfast is not limited to the inner harbor.
 - Explained that Belfast is dominated by maritime uses.
 - Suggested that the City create a vision of an RFP and a manager that implements those ideas.
 - Expressed interest in having these parcels go to people who are committed to the community and are a part of it full-time.
 - Discussed that Belfast is so dense with successful private ownership right now that it is hard to move somewhere or take different steps because nothing is available. Suggested that this project could open up the availability to people who want to participate in Belfast right now but are unable to at this time.
- Ward 5 Councilor Paul Dean
 - Inquired about the floodplain to put down gravel.
 - Explained that he sees multiple buildings in his vision, like blocks. Expressed that they do not have to be the same, that they can be 2-4 stories tall.
 - Discussed that any infrastructure put their needs cable, power, and sewer, just like any infrastructure.
 - Expressed that the project needs to be handicap accessible and connect to Harbor Walk.
 - Suggested a sales agreement where City money assists in putting the structure up and where the City has a say in what goes there in the sales agreement.
 - Suggested that Council should treat this project simply and listen to what people in the community have to say.

- Suggested that if the City puts out a good contract, the City could supply land without putting up a structure. Suggested that the City can then use the money from putting up the infrastructure to invest into other needs.
- Expressed that he is not a fan of developers but prefers contractors.
- Expressed that City staff is our best support to represent us and configure these projects for us
- Suggested that the project should be water based.

- City Manager Erin Herbig
 - Suggested creating a narrative based on the discussion and based on the exercises to share with committees and businesses.
 - Suggested creating another set of questions for a follow-up survey to further hone the priorities of the proposed redevelopment project.
 - Explained that Thompsons Wharf is a revenue generator for the City, and it is an important asset to the City of Belfast. It is currently at maximum capacity and will be through the winter. It is an area for potential investment that has a likely high return.
 - Suggested that the Council conduct a second work session on this project on the 5th Tuesday in November, November 29th. Suggested that the work session could include representatives from committees and some surrounding businesses, and that the City could get a bigger space to hold the session.

- Director of Code and Planning Bub Fournier
 - Explained that there can be parking in a flood zone because there is not a structure present.
 - Explained that the City can dig down and create a bulkhead on the parcel, but the structural integrity would get really expensive. Affirmed that anything is possible with engineering, but there is always a considerable expense.
 - Discussed that the cost of building variety is going to weigh on the project heavily. Suggested some kind of middle ground where there is an allowance of variation and that construction in smaller phases would be helpful in completing the project practically.

- Economic Development Director Thomas Kittredge
 - Explained that the parcel is a brownfield that the City of Belfast cleaned up.
 - Explained that the City would have to find a way to manage the soils on site and suggested that the soils can be used to raise up other areas.
 - Recommended that the goal can still to have multiple owners involved in the project but may be best achieved with a single development or master

developer on the site. Explained that there can be a set of conditions in the contract on the parcel.

- Harbor Master Kathy Given
 - Questioned how the City protects landside use going to the water.
 - Suggested that Council does not put anything down on the parcel that is not necessary or marine related. Explained that may not be the best move because it impedes on the operation on the harbor.
 - Expressed that she is always looking from the water to the land, not the other way around.
 - Explained that mixing a working waterfront with other types of uses causes a different reality that cannot be avoided. Discussed that the working waterfront begins to lose out when having to navigate through the different uses being incorporated into the workspace. Discussed that the State of Maine has been fighting this reality for years.

3) Adjourn:

The Belfast City Council will hold a follow-up work session on Tuesday, November 29th at 6pm. The Work Session will be held at the Shrine Club. Belfast City Manager's Office will extend invitations to discussed City Committees and Downtown Belfast Businesses to attend the session.