

CHINATOWN/LEATHER DISTRICT CENTRAL ARTERY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**MEETING SUMMARY – PARCEL 24, MEETING #2, 7/21/03
OAK TERRACE COMMUNITY ROOM, 888 WASHINGTON STREET**

Question and Answer Summary:

Stephanie Fan, Co-chair of the Chinatown / Leather District Central Artery Advisory Committee, began the meeting announcing that the material would be a repeat of the meeting on June 30th (presentations were repeated). Stephanie reviewed the evening's agenda and introduced Bob Kroin, Chief Architect from the BRA, who gave the presentation on the zoning in the vicinity of Parcel 24 previously done by Yan Gao. Following Kroin's presentation was the same presentation by Bill Tuttle from the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA).

• **Parcel Use and Design Guidelines**

Questions included:

- Clarification of the smaller numbers on the zoning map. (The smaller numbers are as-of-right without Large Project Review.)
- Will Albany Street be a ramp? (It will have traffic options as a ramp would but it will be more like a street with sidewalk and a walkway to cross it.)
- Is Parcel 24 relevant to the Leather District? (Yes, but more as part of the context of Parcel 23d and the future planning of the South-of-Kneeland parcels.)
- What would an (allowed) project cost on the site? (A rough estimation of approximately \$140,000 per housing unit for construction – not including land costs.)
- Has there been a water table study? (Not sure, but the MTA would make that type of information available to developers.)
- What is the timetable for this process? (The site could be available by late 2004/ early 2005. A general timeframe would be for a draft of the design guidelines to be done in September with a more final set of guidelines by October. The MTA would then draft the RFP a month or two later that would then be brought back to the community and the Mayor's Central Artery Task Force.)
- Is Section 106 part of zoning? (No, it is federal legislation and will be enforced through MTA's agreement with the selected developer.)

Mr. Henry Yee commented that he hoped that this process would result in respecting the majority of the residents' opinions since there are diverse opinions throughout the community. He also mentioned that since this parcel used to have approximately 300 residential units that were taken at an undervalued price, he would hope the land could be returned to the community for one dollar for redevelopment for the community. Mr. Yee also asked about the possibility of the MTA transferring the land to a different agency so the land wouldn't have to follow the restrictions of MTA-owned land.

Tuttle stated that the agency has given land to municipalities in a few cases for certain types of uses but that it has not been discussed for this parcel. The MTA understands that in order to achieve the goals of the community of affordable housing the land value would be lower than it would be elsewhere in the city. If the legislation filed by Senator Wilkerson were to pass, then the MTA would abide by it. He stated that regardless of the outcome of the legislation, the community would still need to go through this process of design and development guidelines.

Mr. Yee commented that he hoped the supply of affordable housing in Chinatown continues to increase so that the community would remain a residential neighborhood for Chinese and Asians. Tuttle added that through this process the community would inform potential developers of the types of housing units people want to see. Tuttle explained that when the MTA sells a parcel (even if it's a clause in the lease for first-right-to-purchase by the developer), the MTA is required by law to select the highest responsible bidder, which allows them little or no flexibility to consider the relative merits of the proposals. He went on to explain that through a lease process, which can be done for a committed term of up to 99 years, the

MTA has much greater ability to choose who develops the land and how they develop it. A lease gives everyone involved more discretion in what happens.

There were questions about how condominium ownership would be handled when a 99-year lease was finished. Bill stated that there are successful precedents (in Charlestown, for example) for doing condo buildings on leased land.

- **City Affordable Housing Policy and Techniques in Subsidizing Affordable Units**

Bruce Ehrlich, Senior Finance Analyst from the BRA, commented that on land privately owned, a deed restriction for affordability typically runs 50 years. The difference is if the landowner is a community organization versus a private owner.

Questions included:

- How does it work to “sell” a unit on leased land? (It has worked in several places. While there may be trouble selling a condo in the 97th year, it would not be a problem right now.)
- What if the community desires more affordability and wants more height to make that happen? (In the design and development guidelines, language could include “bonuses” to get more of what the community wants. Developers could look at criteria where there’s a balance of affordability and height.)
- How does the BRA produce the income guidelines? (The income guidelines are determined by HUD and are the same for every project in Boston, but the difference is the “scale” – whether the limit is 80% Area Median Income or 60%. Those percentages vary depending on funding programs. The City’s policy is for 80% - 120% Area Median Income.)

Ending comments from meeting members included hoping that the minimum percentage affordable units in the project would be higher than the City’s 10% policy and that there would be deeper affordability below 80%. Also stated was a request to a commitment to replacing the same number of housing units that were originally on the site at the similar affordability.

Stephanie Fan stated that the next meeting would be on August 4th at St. James Church to begin the discussion about uses.