

Sono Task Force Special Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: Wednesday, July 8, 2015

Meeting Location: Spinnaker Real Estate Partners Conference Room

Meeting Purpose: GGP Presentation on the proposed project

Attendees: Bill Collins, Stephanie Pelletier, Bruce Beinfield, Steve Semaya, Bill Finger, Tilly Hatcher, Eric Rains, Rich Leeds.

GGP: Doug Adams, Rob Jakubik, Larry Cafero

General Public: Matt Storch, Nancy Chapman

Unable to Attend: Rod Johnson, Travis Simms, Bob Burgess, Tom Rich, Susan Sweitzer, Chris Loynd

- 1) Doug Adams presented an overview of the proposed project and reviewed the following points:
 - a. The project is about creating connections: Pedestrian, bike path, thru Mathews Park, along West Avenue, civic and cultural connections. 3000 parking spots will be available via indoor parking.
 - b. Transit connections are important too and GGP is collaborating with transit partners to discuss ideas from a water taxi to a circulator for the Sono area which would bring shoppers to and from the mall to other areas in Sono: such as Washington Street.
 - c. Ideas for co-marketing with the community and existing businesses are being discussed. There is also discussion about a bike share program and a wayfinding initiative.
 - d. There will be a public realm areas: both indoors and outdoors. A boutique hotel is proposed.
 - e. The restaurant plan is being discussed and reviewed. The City of Norwalk put a 10% (of SF) limit on the restaurants. GGP is looking to appeal to the larger national chains and has stated that they are committed to a 6% limit. There will be no food court.

- f. A traffic analysis is to be completed along with further discussion about the Bike lanes.
- 2) Bruce Beinfield commented that a concern of the Sono Task Force is that Sono is fragile and subject to stress; which could potentially disrupt visitation.
 - a. GGP said that the construction will be phased to avoid closing roads and disrupting traffic to Sono. The goal is to keep the area connected and become a regional draw/attraction. The area amenities are positives for the project.
- 3) Bruce Beinfield commented that the area parks, (i.e. along N. Water Street) the park activity and the Aquarium need to be considered vital connections. The goal should be to get people walking: out of their cars and onto sidewalks.
 - a. GGP remarked that Norwalk Community College might be interested in locations near/in the mall.
- 4) Eric Rains asked if GGP would be providing a construction sequencing timetable.
 - a. GGP responded yes, a timetable would be produced and shared and that there will be community input meetings and sessions. The goal is to start by April 2016, with an opening date of October 2018. The hotel would open late 2018. Everything would be completed for the mall opening.
- 5) Steve Semaya asked if the project spans N. Water Street and if GGP could provide examples of this type of design.
 - a. GGP said the design is under review, but that the intention is to create a welcoming entrance. (The ingress is 30' high). GGP said they would send to the Sono Task Force design examples. The issues of traffic, design/scale over N. Water and the overall look of the project are being worked on.
- 6) Rich Leeds asked how many stories is the hotel and about the location of the restaurants.
 - a. GGP said the hotel is 12 stories and that zoning allows for 200'.
 - b. GGP indicated that the restaurants will probably be along West Avenue, in the hotel and near center court.
- 7) Bill Collins asked about the creation of construction jobs and if GGP will be hiring local workers and asking the contractor for a guarantee on only locals hired.
 - a. GGP said that the contractor would weigh in on that issue, that the priority is to hire locally, collaborate to achieve labor harmony and advertise locally for jobs.

- b. Bill Collins said that a ‘best efforts’ benchmark for the contractor might not be enough.
 - c. GGP said they would work with the contractor, the city and the unions we have relationships with. Permanent jobs can be filled locally. GGP is committed to a training and development program (i.e. with Norwalk Community College) to develop a qualified applicant pool.
- 8) Steve Semaya asked for clarification on the number of restaurants and the type of restaurants at the mall. Steve recalled that he thought there were going to be 2 large national chains and that also the SF % had increased from 6% to 10% in terms of allowable SF.
- a. GGP said that they usually have 10-12% of the SF go to restaurants. The City of Norwalk Ad Hoc committee approved a 10% limit on restaurants. GGP is committed to staying within the 6% limit.
 - b. GGP referenced the Gibbs report on the impact of restaurants and that the mall will bring a lot of people to Sono to try all of the things Sono has to offer.
 - c. Larry Cafero added that the project has always had 2 anchors and 3-5 national chain restaurants and while the city said the mall could have up to 10% SF for restaurants, GGP is committed to the 6%. The Gibbs report also stated that the local restaurants are usually the biggest beneficiaries with adjacency to a mall.
- 9) Bruce Beinfield asked how many visitors, annually, would the mall expect.
- a. GGP said that the projected number of visitors is in the millions.
 - b. Bruce added that the Sono Task Force needs to find ways to increase the synergy with the mall.
 - c. GGP added that the mall is not a single store concept like Home Depot. GGP creates environments. There will be a dedicated team to running the mall so there will be a local presence for us (STF) to work with.
- 10) Bill Finger added that wayfinding to/from the mall and out of the parking garage is key to promote Sono.
- a. Bill Collins added that Redevelopment is working on wayfinding and can collaborate with GGP on efforts.
- 11) GGP concluded that maps, co-promotions and marketing are key to get people to Norwalk with ongoing community input critical.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephanie Pelletier
Sono Task Force
July 20, 2015