

Transit Oriented Development Comment
Submitted by - Naomi baat-Canaan

Development on our Waterfront is a very sensitive issue for many different reasons. Not only is it environmentally difficult but it's also financially questionable. For instance who will ultimately benefit from a TOD, and will this development enhance Beaconites and their community in the long run both financially and socially.

The MTA has not clearly stated their goals and neither has their intentions been clearly established. Is their goal to maximize their profits from any development? If so, there is only one way the owners or developers of this property will maximize their agenda for bottom line profits and that's to build high towers, and lots of them all along the Waterfront.

On the other hand the goal of Beacon has been established? it's to create addition revenues, not revenues to replace Main Street, but additional revenues to augment Main Street revenues. Therefore, There is only one way Beacon will profit from any development on the Waterfront and that is to build low density studio and one bedroom apartments or small one bedroom co-ops or condos, and by keeping parking availability low and by linking these new residents to Main Street Beacon via - built into contract ? conveyance vehicles.

Some of the issues I have spoken about before are

#1 Insularity

#2 Main Street Impact

#3 Parking and Traffic

#4 utilities, Services and costs

First:

Beacon has one insular entity at the Waterfront, and that's DIA. It neither has any public art show scheduled for this coming year to tie DIA to Main Street, nor does it provide any transportation to or from Main Street, nor does it actively work at having or giving information about Main Street and Beacon's galleries to its visitors.

People come to DIA and have no idea that there is a town up the hill.

If we were San Francisco this would not be a problem. In San Francisco there is public transportation to all corners of the city. Beacon has hills that rival those in San Francisco, but it has no public transportation to automatically connect the lower Waterfront to upper Beacon.

Requiring a conveyance service, something like a four passenger electric or hybrid vehicle to operate on the hour on Fri. Sat and Sun and every two hours during the rest of the week, which the developers of the Waterfront maintain is essential to make the needed connection between lower and upper Beacon

Secondly:

It has been proposed, that Main Street businesses will be given first priority to open up a store on the Waterfront,

This proposal though doesn't take into account the enormous and untenable financial quandary that a small business would face.

A move is extremely expensive and forcing a Main Street business to go to the Waterfront in order to remain in business is not smart planning. The least effect this type of policy will produce is to leave another store vacant on Main Street. In fact, allowing direct competitive businesses to open anywhere on the Waterfront will not generate more revenue. In fact the shock to Main Street may be insurmountable and comparable to what happened to many Main Streets across the country when box stores moved in.

We cannot put competing businesses such as restaurants, bike rentals and galleries on the Waterfront without realizing that this will cause businesses on Main Street to close. That's just a fact.

Therefore it may be advisable to pre set parameters, for example, commercial rentals may be more profitable to Beacon (and that's the goal) if a TOD only caters to Service and Professional Offices for commercial rentals and studio and one-bedroom apartments or studio or one-bedroom co-ops or condos for residential.

Third:

Do we add more parking or not? If we want a truly TOD zone than the answer is no. And if that is the case then we need to construct residences and commercial spaces that will be sufficiently served by the metro line, a car rental facility, a 50 cents Beacon to train service, and by a four passenger hourly vehicle provided by any development on the Waterfront.

As I have mentioned before if two underground parking levels are to be built, who will monitor them, how will they be kept clean and not used as a toilet, as the underground pass and the elevator at the station are now being used for? Will these underground parking facilities be gated, will they be safe and will they be affordable to use and maintain?

If more spaces are built more cars will come. Do we want more cars at the Waterfront?

And fourth;

Will Beacon need a new pump station, new roads, new sewers or more services? If so who will pay for them?

And this may be the big question ?

Can the Waterfront be developed at no further cost to Beacon taxpayers?

Can the Waterfront be developed at no loss of revenue to Beacon?

These issue need to be addressed in detail before any decision is to be made regarding the Waterfront, even regarding the planned hotel and conference center.

At the moment the law allows for six story structures on our Waterfront. As in other instances, pushing this limit to ten or twelve stories by a developer will only mean waiting it out until a new city council comes into power who will allow this tall tower variance. To avoid this from happening now or sometime in the future we need to change the law now. The standard height on the Waterfront needs to be limited to two stories.

A variance can always be given to allow two stories on top of a one or two story-parking garage. This can

be applied for and granted when and if it becomes the way to build parking and residences on the Waterfront.

Granting a variance is much easier than fighting a developer who will wage an active campaign to go twelve stories instead of six.

Developing the Waterfront in order to generate revenue is a lofty goal, and it's very exciting to think that one day we might stand on 9D and look down onto the Waterfront and see green roofed terraced residences and commercial spaces that create a unique and wonderful addition to our city and even to the state of New York. I've brought an example of such a project with me today and will leave a copy with the council.

Last but not least, we have a hill between the lower Waterfront and Upper Beacon and this fact will always be an issue in any development unless linkage is the first consideration in any project while the health of Main Street is maintained at the same time.

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