Chelsea Forbes Lofts

Site Details: Mixed Use Development, 17.7 acres of waterfront
Zoning: Waterfront with Special Permits
Funding: Private Developer

Date(s): Summer 2005-
Goals: Revitalize Waterfront; Increase Tax Base; Provide Market Rate Housing

Rendering of the completed Chelsea Lofts
Source: Urban Design and Development

Background

Forbes Lofts is an ongoing project on a 17.7 acre waterfront site in Chelsea. The area was previously the home to industrial uses, including an old printing factory. Because the site is designated as a brownfield, the project began with site clean up in the summer of 2005. Currently the project is on hold due to permitting challenges and a tough economic market. However, when completed, it will include 350 loft units, as well as 20,000 square feet of commercial, restaurant, and office space in addition to public green space. The developer was motivated by a unique architectural and environmental design. The developer knew the space would attract those who had deeper psychological reasons for wanting to purchase a new home; those who cared about environmental and global issues. The city of Chelsea saw the benefits of a "green" development on a site that was previously only marginally used. The development would greatly increase their tax base and fulfill a need for market-rate housing.

Windmill on site.

Site Development

The developer, Urban Design and Development, has undergone a year of clean up including deconstructing buildings that were no longer viable, clearing out debris, and repairing the sea wall. They have also replanted a neighboring salt marsh environment and conducted asbestos and lead paint abatement. Building X, a historic four-story building on site, has been converted into sixty eight lofts and includes an open air breezeway that enhances natural light and fresh air throughout. In the next three phases of construction, more of the existing buildings will be converted into residential units, including the Canal Row Building and the Mill Creek House. New buildings will be constructed for residential purposes as well. The developer will also build commercial spaces and a new restaurant, the Boiler Room Restaurant and Bar. They will construct rain catchment pools and fields as well as a Harbor Pavilion, greenhouses, an observation deck, and a central meadow.

Prior Industrial Use at the Site
Source: Urban Design and Development

Development Process

The major issues that the project has faced include a complex permitting process and funding difficulties that have caused the developer to refinance several times. While there were relatively few concerns from the community regarding the development, some did express anxiety after the windmill was initially put up. In response to these community questions, the town held a public meeting where the developer explained the benefits of the windmill and fortunately there have been no complaints after one year of the windmill's operation. The city, however, did introduce a new wind ordinance that impedes the possibility of putting up new windmills by imposing more restrictions.

Environmental Management Plan
Source: Urban Design and Development

The area was originally zoned "waterfront." To allow for the development, special permits were issued. The developer offered a broad and varied package of community benefits, including public waterfront access, sitting areas, and green space which would be a benefit to all Chelsea residents. The project is funded entirely by the private developer.


Site Before Development
Source: Urban Design and Development


Rendering of Completed Chelsea Forbes Lofts
Source: Urban Design and Development

Forbes Lofts and MetroFuture Goals

Transportation Choices

The community will have access to upgraded hybrid plug-in cars, water taxis to Boston, a shuttle directly to the Beachmont T station, and a ride sharing bulletin.

Sustainable Growth Patterns

The lofts incorporate many green aspects, including an onsite wind turbine, solar panels, water space preserved for migratory birds and fish, the use of storm water for flushing toilets, and the restoration of wetlands and a salt marsh nursery. In addition to receiving half of its energy from renewable resources, the site will also reuse old factory buildings as loft space and incorporate renewable natural materials.

Community Vitality

In the plans is a paved boardwalk that will rest on top of the new seawall and provide all Chelsea residents with access to the waterfront. The developer will also provide park benches and other green space in an attempt to inspire other similar spaces for recreation on the waterfront.

Contact Information

For more information about Forbes Lofts contact developer Blair Galinsky at *blair@forbeslofts.com*

"This project was beneficial for Chelsea because it reclaimed this waterfront space for residential use and tied it more closely to the existing neighborhoods" -John DePriest, Director of Planning and Development, Chelsea