
From: Aurelle Ross
Sent: Tuesday, November 15, 2022 2:40 PM
To: eric.curl@savannahagenda.com
Subject: Conceptual Plans for 916 MLK Jr. Blvd. Property

Hi Eric,

I received your questions regarding 916 MLK Jr. Blvd and our Housing and Neighborhood Services director, Martin Fretty has provided a written statement that covers everything. Please see the statement below:

“The City’s housing team has been looking at a vacant City-owned lot that may be utilized to develop housing for persons and families with low and moderate incomes. The cluster of lots with street frontage at 916 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, is being considered for 16 two-bedroom apartments with supportive services that could be built to house couples and small families who are experiencing homelessness or seeking to avoid becoming homeless.

The first floor of the proposed building fronting MLK Jr. Blvd. would offer services to renters and neighborhood residents, including meeting space, space for service providers, laundry, and bathrooms. It would be professionally staffed and open, like most leasing and resident service rooms in apartment communities.

The development will provide high-quality apartments with supportive services at affordable prices. This initiative is increasingly important in this neighborhood as recent and ongoing nearby housing development is not affordable to persons with low or moderate incomes.

While well-intentioned, design standards for new construction in this neighborhood are also contributing to the cost of new construction and making it difficult to provide housing at affordable prices. Seeking relief from some design standards can help lower costs without sacrificing the neighborhood’s quality or architectural character.

Development plans for this site are still in the preliminary and conceptual design stages. Therefore, the City’s housing team enlisted the help of the Executive Directors of the Community Housing Services Agency, Inc. (CHSA) and the Chatham Savannah Authority for the Homeless in the design process. In addition, CHSA engaged the services of an architect to help develop conceptual designs.

Before finalizing development plans for the site, the City’s housing team will consider the proposed design, programming, costs, funding, and financing required. It will also consider development, ownership, management, and service provider/partnership options. Because the City owns the land, the transfer for development will require City Council approval. So, too, will the use of City funds should they be necessary. The housing team expects to finalize its recommendations in the first quarter of 2023. Then, with hopes, construction will begin in the second quarter of 2023, and occupancy starting in 2024.

Recently, the architect submitted a proposal for design standard relief to the MPC with the expectation that the request would be considered on November 21. Instead, CHSA and the City have

requested that MPC move consideration of the request to January—giving members of the City’s housing team time to review further and discuss the proposed concept plans and relief request.”

Best,

Aurelle’ Ross

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From: <eric.curl@savannahagenda.com>

Sent: Tuesday, November 8, 2022 8:30 AM

To: Nick Zoller <NZoller@Savannahga.Gov>; Keturah Greene <KGreene@Savannahga.Gov>

Subject: [Caution - External Email] 916 MLK homeless transitional center, apts

Good morning Nick and Keturah ,

I am working on a story about the plans the city recently submitted to construct a homeless transitional center, with apartments, at the former pharmacy site at 916 MLK, which will go before the Historic Preservation Commission next week.

Can you tell me if the city has funding for the construction of this center in place and how much it anticipates it will cost?

Also, how long is construction expected to take?

Lastly, how was Shay Architects hired to design the building? Was an RFP issued?

Thanks again,

Eric

Eric Curl

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