

New Southwest Waterfront Plan Presented to the Community

BY WILLIAM RICH

The 514-seat Kreeger Theater at Arena Stage was almost filled to capacity on Sept. 29, with people interested in hearing about the revised master plan for the Southwest Waterfront. Representatives from the Hoffman-Madison Marquette Waterfront team and EE&K Architects presented their vision for the waterfront, a 26-acre development along the Washington Channel. There are five key development principles for the Southwest Waterfront, which include: create an accessible, lively waterfront neighborhood - alive with people, activity, commerce, culture and recreation; bring the District to the water's edge; restore successful elements of Southwest DC to serve as a great place for District residents; become a model development by use of best practices for sustainability; and create an enduring place - a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for all of the people of Washington.

As it stands now, the plan for the \$1.5 billion re-imagining of the Southwest Waterfront will yield 560 residential units; 600 keys in three hotels; 840,000 square feet of office space; 335,000 square feet of ground-floor retail; a cultural element - either a music hall, museum, or maritime education facility; 2,500 underground parking spaces; and 400-500 marina slips, which includes the live-aboard community at

the Gangplank Marina. About 60% of the site area will be public space.

In exchange for allowing the development to proceed, the Hoffman-Madison Marquette Waterfront team is offering a community benefits package. Thirty percent of the residential units will be affordable -- half of the affordable units will be for those earning up to 30% of AMI and the other half for those earning up to 60% of AMI. The affordable units will blend in with market-rate housing. At least 51% of all new jobs will go to District residents with an emphasis on Wards 5, 6, 7 and 8. Between 650 - 1,000 construction jobs will be created and 2,800 permanent jobs will be created (1,000 of them will be service jobs). At a minimum, 35% of goods and services will be provided by Certified Business Enterprises (CBE). In addition, 20% of retail will be reserved for unique and local retailers.

The Southwest Waterfront development will be built in three phases; however, Phase I and Phase II could be combined depending on whether the development team can secure enough pre-leasing. Phase I will be from 7th Street, SW to 9th Street, SW, including 7th Street Park & Pier and City Pier. It will include two hotels with 40,000 square feet of retail, office, a residential building and the Capital Yacht Club. Phase II will stretch from 9th Street, SW to the Fish Market, which will include a music hall or other cultural element, farmer's



Planners envision City Pier as a civic space, similar to the Santa Monica Pier in California, with a boardwalk coming from the Washington Channel all the way up to Maine Avenue, SW. Courtesy of Hoffman-Madison Marquette Waterfront

The Wharf will be the main attraction of the new Southwest Waterfront. Courtesy of Hoffman-Madison Marquette Waterfront

market, office, retail, and residential. Phase III will be from 7th Street, SW to P Street Park. It will include residential, office, hotel, retail and a commercial pier.

Following is a description of some of the major public spaces planned in the new Southwest Waterfront. The City Pier will serve as the terminus of 9th Street, SW from Maine Avenue, SW and will jut out into the Washington Channel. This will be the main

civic space of the waterfront, where tall ships can dock, a band shell may be located at the end of the pier, and a landmark light tower may be located adjacent to the pier. City Pier will also be the area that will have the most programmed activity.

Market Square and Pier is near the current Maine Avenue Fish Market, which will be refurbished. In addition, a new farmer's market will be built north of the fish market

to replace the head house market that once existed in the area back in the 1930s. A seasonal market, brewery, cafes, picnic tables, and restaurants will be located in this informal space and a couple of barges will be added.

7th Street Park will be at the terminus of 7th Street, SW and will be more formal in nature than Market Square. It will be a grassy area with lots of trees and the retail space adjacent to the park will be reserved for higher-end restaurants. There will be a pedestrian pier with perhaps a gazebo and kayak rental facilities.

Across from Arena Stage will be M Street Landing, an open space that connects the waterfront to Arena Stage. This area will have 1-2 story buildings so Arena Stage can serve as a showcase building visible from the waterfront. There will be a traffic circle on Maine Avenue, SW in front of Arena Stage and a water feature - perhaps an ice skating rink - that will be near the Washington Channel. The planners envision M Street Landing as being a fun area with less formal restaurants and family-oriented retail. M Street Landing will also serve as a staging area for the cruise ships that will all operate at the commercial pier nearby.

Maine Avenue, SW will become a neighborhood street, with ground floor convenience goods retail running along its length, such as dry cleaners, bakery, pharmacy, etc. Each side of Maine Avenue, SW will have a travel lane on the left, a second travel lane that shares space with a streetcar line, and a parking/loading lane. A row of street trees will separate the road from a 10-foot wide bike lane and a 15-foot sidewalk, so buildings will be 25 feet away from the street. Traffic lights will be added at the new Maine Avenue, SW traffic circle, the northwestern edge of Arena Stage, and the Grand Staircase planned to connect the 10th Street, SW overlook to the waterfront. Tour buses will be moved to Maine Avenue, SW near M Street Landing so cruise ship patrons have easy access to the commercial pier.

The main attraction at the Southwest Waterfront will be The Wharf, which is the promenade that will run the length of the waterfront from Market Square to M Street Landing. Water Street, SW will be removed

and replaced with Wharf Street, SW, a 20-foot right-of-way closer to the waterfront with limited vehicular access and possibly a streetcar line that will run northwest-bound. The promenade will be 60 feet wide broken into three equal sections and in most places will be at "elevation 13" or 13 feet above the surface of the channel. The 20-foot section closest to buildings will be for outdoor seating. The middle 20-foot section will be Wharf Street, SW. The 20-foot section closest to the shoreline will be for pedestrians.

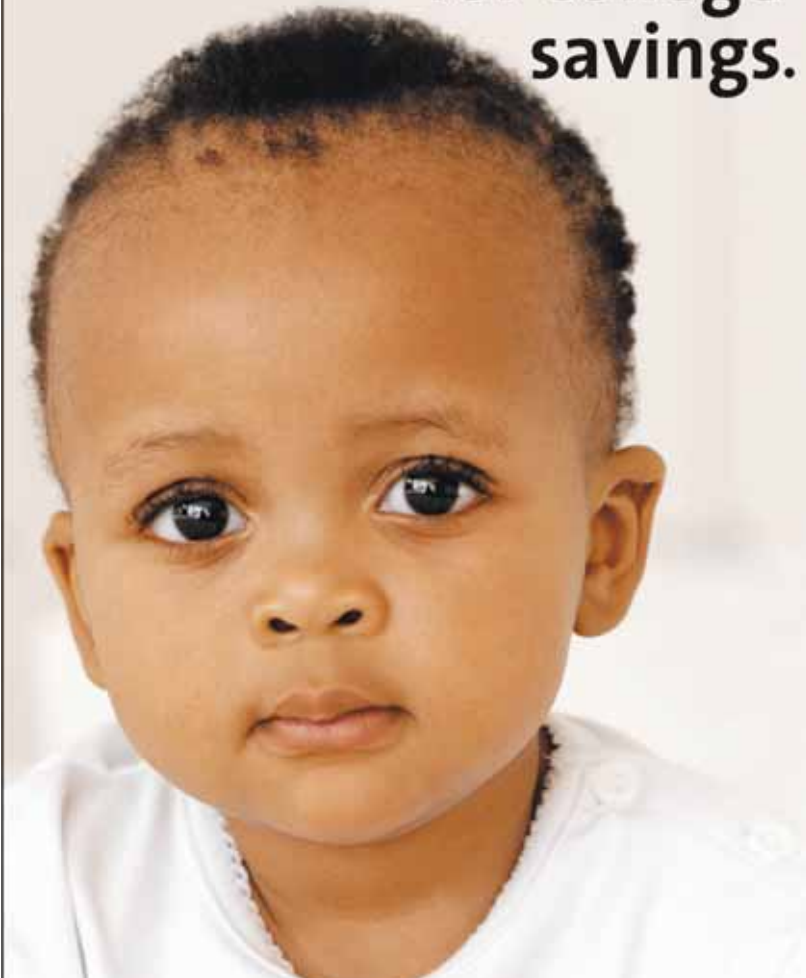
Other public spaces planned include Waterfront Park, which will be a large park space where tour buses currently idle; P Street Park; The Grove, which will be a more intimate space near the Gangplank Marina; The Mews; Theater Alley; Transit Plaza and Pier; and Club Plaza. A major component of the experience that a visitor will have when going to the new Southwest Waterfront will be the programming that will occur. Concerts, fireworks, festivals, seasonal markets, and many other big & small planned events will animate the waterfront so a visitor will not have the same experience twice. The northwest side of the waterfront will be the more lively area while the activity and buzz starts to die down closer to the existing neighborhood on the southeast side.

A main concern of residents at the presentation was the height of the proposed development, which in some spots will have 11-story buildings. To help address this concern, planners have oriented most of the buildings perpendicular to The Wharf to minimize blocked views to the waterfront. Taller buildings will also be positioned to avoid a wall effect along the waterfront and enhance view corridors. The entire development is aiming for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design - Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) and individual buildings will be seeking LEED-Gold or Silver. The Planned Unit Development (PUD) process will begin this fall and construction is supposed to begin in late 2012. Construction should last 7-8 years.

William Rich is a blogger at Southwest...The Little Quadrant that Could (www.southwestquadrant.blogspot.com) ★

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