

ISSUES OF CONCERN WITH ICINOLA DEVELOPMENT

As citizens of the Bywater, we support and encourage development and growth in our neighborhood, but feel strongly that any new development to smart, well conceived, responsible, fit within the historic character of the Bywater Historic District and include adequate community outreach and feedback.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT (FROM CITY PLANNING COMMISSION PRELIMINARY STAFF REPORT):

"The petitioned site consists of twenty-eight (28) lots spread over four (4) City squares that together occupy approximately **120,360 square feet (2.76 acres)**. The applicants propose a mixed-use development for the site, including new construction and adaptive reuse of existing structures, which **upon completion would provide 34,662 square feet of commercial and community center space, one hundred five (105) dwelling units, and two hundred two (202) accessory off-street parking spaces**. The petitioned site consists of four (4) separate building sites, one at each corner of the intersection of Bartholomew and Burgundy Streets."

1999 LAND USE PLAN CONFLICT:

As noted by the City Planning Commission Preliminary staff report (p. 25) "The proposed action is in conflict with the 1999 Land Use Plan, which recommends **"Residential - Single and Two Family"** use for the site. Of the land use categories employed in that plan, the current proposal is most consistent with the "Neighborhood Mixed Use" category, which was recommended along the **Riverfront and Saint Claude Avenue** corridors (pp. 178-180)."

MASSING:

The massing of the buildings are **out of scale with the existing neighborhood buildings**, the majority of which are single story and contrast greatly with the proposed ICINola oversized bulky structures that will tower to 5 stories in certain areas. No division has been created within the buildings' architecture that would remotely resemble that of the spacing found between shotguns. This project will lead to the **loss of sunlight, loss of side views, loss of backyard privacy and loss of street/neighborhood character**.

DENSITY:

The average Bywater block contains 48 units. This was the base used by the BNA to request specific density for the Bywater Art Loft project from HRI. The City Council approved this project with the BNA proviso of limiting the project to 40 units and completing the block with the 8 existing units (made up of 4 Double Shotgun Houses). ICINola requests 104 in total. This density is too high.

APPEARANCE:

The proposed structures are extremely modern in appearance and do not blend in with the surrounding neighborhood.

PARKING / TRAFFIC:

ICINola has been granted a **waiver of 67 off-street parking spaces** by the City Planning Commission. Parking waivers should not have been granted; existing residents are currently forced to utilize street parking due to the nature of the existing land use. As noted in the City Planning Commission Preliminary Report (p. 16) **"The proposed development would likely cause a significant increase in traffic on the streets surrounding the petitioned site."** A Traffic Impact Analysis must be conducted that takes into account traffic from the proposed ICINola development as well as traffic from the Bywater Lofts, the Cruise Ship terminal and proposed Riverfront Development.

DRAINAGE / FLOODING:

The site of the proposed development is currently comprised of many vacant lots, allowing extra space for water drainage and run off. However, there are already problems with water drainage and street flooding in the area. There is concern that replacing these vacant lots with large slab grade buildings with no spacing between will further aggravate drainage problems.

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:

The ownership of two properties on Bartholomew Street within the proposed development are in question.

MOVING HISTORIC STRUCTURES:

ICINola proposes to **relocate two historic shotguns** currently within the proposed development to other lots within the Bywater. This sets a dangerous precedent for future developments.

CONSTRUCTION / POTENTIAL DAMAGE TO SURROUNDING STRUCTURES:

Building the proposed development will require pile driving and the usage of heavy construction equipment. The ICINola construction will potentially **cause structural damage to surrounding existing historic homes**.

OPEN SPACES / GREEN BUILDING:

Open spaces are important to the quality of life in Bywater. ICINola proposes the use of green walls and green roofs in place of usable recreation areas. The developer has not given enough information to show that green roofs will be usable as more than an energy saving convenience, and any such green benefits will likely be counteracted by emissions produced by the additional traffic. **Open spaces and breathable air are necessary to our quality of life.**

SUSTAINABLE PLANNING:

Sustainable planning limits the impact on the environment, encourages walkability and mass transit use. ICINola singles itself out as its own entity as opposed to being part of an already sustainable neighborhood. ICINola proclaims the need for another **small grocery**, fitness center, art galleries, and other providers that would operate in competition with existing retailers. While the neighborhood has expressed the desire for a full scale grocery store, ICINola **does not plan for a full scale grocery**, has not given any assurances that a grocery store will actually be put in place or that said grocery will cater to the needs and income levels of the entire community.

FINANCING & RETAIL COMMITMENTS:

The developers have not indicated that they have secured any financing for the development. When asked about financing at the BNA meeting on April 10, 2007, the developers stated that there would be an announcement "at some point." ICINola has secured **no retail commitments** for the proposed development, giving no guarantees that the retail spaces will be used as indicated in the developers' plans. Traditionally, developers secure at least tentative retail commitments as part of the planning process. Without the assurances of financing and retail commitments, there are major concerns regarding the developers' ability to actually build the development.

ACTUAL INTENT TO BUILD:

There is no guarantee that the developers will complete the project. Their past track record leads to suspicions they intend to acquire the rezoning and other approvals and then sell off the development - as they have done previously three times in Atlanta. The developers have stated they intend to build ICINola, but have also publicly stated that **they will sell if offered enough money.**

LACK OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

The Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP) stresses community involvement in the rebuilding and development process. **Community participation and feedback regarding ICINola has been severely limited.** Community outreach was mainly conducted through the Bywater Neighborhood Association (BNA), an organization with only 185 members out of 5000 households in the Bywater. Little was done to publicize the proposed development informational meetings to the community at large. Signs were not posted around the neighborhood, the BNA website was not updated to notify residents of the April 10th final ICINola presentation to the BNA, and handouts that were delivered to the homes of some, but not all residents in the area the day of said meeting did not mention the meeting.

CRIME:

Due to the cost of the condo units, the condo owners are likely to be part-timers or tourists who are borrowing/renting condos that have been bought as second homes. This will **potentially lead to an increase in crime** as tourists make good targets, because due to the transient nature of the condos and retail it will be hard to tell who belongs to the neighborhood, and there will be less committed full-time residents around to deter crime.

PROPERTY TAX INCREASE:

The proposed development will **raise property taxes for the neighborhood**, further adding to post-Katrina financial burdens faced by many homeowners, potentially driving some of homeowners out of the neighborhood and further increasing rents for rental properties.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Sign the Bywater Civic Association petition to James Carter online at BywaterNOLA.com. If you do not have internet access, please leave us a message at (504) 322-7202 and we will be happy to meet you at your convenience to sign the petition.

You may also contact Carter's office directly by email, phone or fax:

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