City of Port Washington Identifies New Downtown Lakefront Development Sites with Residential Focus in “Marina District”

PORT WASHINGTON, WI: The City of Port Washington Community Development Authority (CDA), in collaboration with Community Design Solutions (CDS) of Milwaukee, has unveiled an action plan for development of several sites in its historic downtown lakefront business district.

The plan was presented at a public information meeting on November 5th and is intended to guide future development. The plan comes on the heels of a recent parking study conducted by Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates of Boston, which concluded that there is an opportunity for more residential and mixed use development along the lakefront in the downtown area – and more than sufficient parking to support it.

“Our City of Port Washington has enjoyed significant increases in traffic volume from the presence of Duluth Trading Company in our downtown, as well as several other new businesses that have opened, including Twisted Willow Restaurant and those in the newly renovated historic Boerner Mercantile Building,” stated City Planner Randy Tetzlaff.

Harbour Lights, a mixed use commercial and residential condominium project with Lake Michigan views, has been approved and the developer is expecting to break ground early next year.

“Our unveiling of this Master Development Plan continues a time of great activity, excitement, and opportunity for our City,” said Mayor Tom Mlada. “We believe it is an executable plan that will spur economic development, private investment, job growth, business sustainability, and of course, tax base increment in our unique downtown lakefront, the only in Ozaukee County – and we are eager to move forward with the next steps of its execution.”

The plan identifies five primary redevelopment sites in the downtown tax increment district, as well as growth opportunities and other improvements in the Marina area, with emphasis on branding a portion of the area as the city’s “Marina District.” The five areas involve:
**Portabella Pizzeria and Restaurant:** This site fronting on both E. Washington and E. Pier is tucked between a historic home to the east and historic Chair Factory apartments to the west. The proposed use is 2-story townhomes or row houses, each fronting on a street. Covered parking would be internal within the site and there would be balconies along E. Washington for lake views.

**Former grocery store space in the Port Center:** This is 11,000 SF of vacant retail space adjacent to the North Slip along E. Washington Street. The building has not been used in almost 20 years and is in need of renovation but presents an incredible lakefront space with panoramic views. Proposed use is for a privately-owned banquet hall and community center, providing flexible space for small or large events such as weddings; corporate events and meetings; an indoor farmers’ market, parties; or even classroom space. The east elevation which faces the water would flow onto the Harborwalk and adjacent development to the east.

**Parking lot adjacent to the North Slip:** This 42-stall public parking along E. Washington Street would become a waterfront destination such as a brewery and/or restaurant. The building envisioned would have a maximum of 2-stories to protect view corridors to the north; the second floor could be a secondary commercial use. There would be a wider walkway/promenade for pedestrians along the Harborwalk as well as an indoor/outdoor space for drinking/dining and optional event space for rent.

**Victor’s Pier Street Shanty and the adjacent parking lot:** Currently, this site, which is bounded by E. Pier, Harborview Lane and E. Washington, houses Victor’s Restaurant. The proposed future use of the site is a multi-story residential structure, with ground level covered parking possible due to the topography. The adjacent parking lot would be pushed eastward to both expand the development site and provide additional public off-street parking for marina and retail patrons.

**Jadair property:** This is a 3.24 acre industrial site located in the heart of downtown west of S. Milwaukee Street along the Sauk Creek. The intention is for the industrial business located there to be moved to an industrial area into a more efficient facility. The site is large enough for two separate projects or developments. The proposed use is to take advantage of the southern exposure and develop new multi-family residential, perhaps in a phased approach. The site avails itself to a multi-story structure on the west with ground-level covered parking and for townhouses to the east also with ground-level covered parking. The area along the creek is wooded allowing for walking paths and possible connection to the Ozaukee Interurban Trail.

**Marina entrance and parking lot.** The positive impact the Port Marina has on the community cannot be underestimated, with annual multi-million dollar economic impact. A grander entry and other signage announcing you have entered the “Marina District” is proposed. A narrowing of Washington Street at Harborview Lane would be constructed and flanked by a gateway structure or design detail to indicate such entry. The parking study recommended that the paved parking be greened-up, perhaps involving more landscaped islands or use of permeable concrete. Access to
and from the marina lot would be (re)designed to accommodate large boat trailers, and pedestrian connections to north beach, the new breakwater entrance, and Harborwalk will be improved.

Both the Plan Commission and Common Council reviewed and accepted the plan. The CDA will begin work on its implementation immediately, with initial action anticipated in early 2015.

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