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Developers propose parking structure with apartments in Downingtown



By **GINGER DUNBAR**

PUBLISHED: June 19, 2015 at 4:05 p.m. | UPDATED: August 19, 2021 at 2:25 a.m.

DOWNINGTOWN >> Developers have proposed to create a seven-story parking structure with 72 condo apartments, in place of the Borough lot for public parking.

The plan, called Union Place, is being proposed by Andrew Hicks, owner and president of Tripoint Properties, Inc. of Downingtown.



“We are working on preserving our history while also allowing our community to modernize and move forward in a way that is going to attract the next generation of Downingtown residents to our world class schools, restaurants and parks,” Council President Anthony “Chip” Gazzo said after the council’s meeting to hear the proposal and bid for the project. “We are excited about the potential of Union Place and are carefully reviewing the details as we consider how to best move forward.”

This project is proposed at 150 and 170 East Lancaster Avenue. It is currently a Borough parking lot with 67 public parking spaces that are metered. The lot is located next to the former Molly Maguire’s. Overall, the developers proposed 171 parking spaces for tenants and the public.

Developers proposed 83 public parking spaces. This plan involves an additional 17 public parking spaces than what is currently available. Access to the parking garage and the public parking is proposed off of Parke Alley, near the Washington Avenue end of the property. The public parking will be located on the lower two levels.

The plan includes 88 parking spaces for the apartment tenants with two of those parking spaces allocated for property management for onsite employees. There will be 72 apartment units. This includes 58 one bedroom units and 14 two-bedroom units. Parking spaces for the apartment tenants will allocate one parking space per bedroom.

Apartments could view the street or the proposed plaza for apartment tenants. The condo apartments will be known as “The Flats at Union Place.” Some units will front Lancaster Avenue while the other units will front Washington Avenue.

There will be four retail shops in the structure, known as the “Shops at Union Place.” Developers said that the retail space has been “designed to maximize window line, be flexible in layout and attractive to boutiques, restaurants and other retail businesses.”

Developers said their total project cost is \$14 million.

Borough officials said they will determine to accept or decline the bid offer by developers of \$325,000 to purchase the property. That equals \$8.85 per square-foot. According to the developers, that is about nearly 19 percent above the average payment for land parcels in the Downingtown area in the past five years

“Before the bid is accepted or the project is approved, I am personally going to walk the neighborhood to understand any concerns the neighbors or businesses in the area may have,” Downingtown Mayor Josh Maxwell said. “As a community, we move forward together.”

If the bid is accepted, Borough officials said this plan would go through a conditional use hearing and then the land development process. It is expected that construction could begin during the summer in 2016, if approved.

Council members had recently requested a proposal for public parking. Council members were informed of the parking structure, residential units and retail shop plans during their June 3 meeting and are reviewing the bid. The entity that will own the property during the investment is known as Union Place partners, L.P.

“We have been working hard at attracting the type of urban development that will have a long-term impact on our local economy, while also preserving the culture of Downingtown that has always made our community special,” said Borough Manager Steve Sullins. “We believe Union Place, The Flats and shops, will help us to achieve that vision.”

Maxwell echoed that Borough officials have been looking for opportunities to bring a modern feel to the area while trying to attract more retail development in the downtown for people to take advantage of.

“We hope to attract young couples looking to move into a great school district and take advantage of our amazing restaurants in addition to our rail access to Philadelphia, New York and Washington D.C.,” Maxwell said. “This project will breathe new life into our community while allowing us to preserve the rich history of Downingtown that makes our community one of the best places to live in the Commonwealth.”

Tripoint Properties will manage and maintain the parking garage.

Maxwell said the parking structure will be built debt-free and it will improve the Borough’s tax base because the Borough will receive tax revenue from the building, including property tax and from public parking costs. He said this plan may attract more businesses and more visitors because of the retail space and the additional parking.

“This is going to bring a modern feel to Downingtown that will be unique to

Maxwell said Borough officials will later determine the cost of parking. He said the fee may be cheaper than other surrounding areas and will be set at what “makes sense for businesses and for customers.”

“We’re going to make sure our businesses are happy and our residential communities are happy,” Maxwell said. “I think it’s safe to say, Downingtown will remain one of the least expensive places for people to visit, shop and eat because of its unique situation. It’s a debt-free parking structure right in the middle of our downtown.”

The building is proposed at 75 feet tall. This would be about the same height as neighboring buildings, including the former Molly Maguire’s and the Dane Decor bell tower building on Lancaster Avenue.