

Blonder Hotel & U/G Garage

Who Pays and Who Benefits

Are the bi-weekly meetings between Blonder/Fillat and City's staff the early stages of a sole source negotiation? It is hard to tell without a public representative participating. The omissions and misrepresentations in Peter Fillat's presentation on February 27 make one wonder.

1. Omitting the entry/exit on Dock Street increases the parking spaces by 34 (373 to 407), but shifts the bulk of traffic from Dock Street (a commercial street) to Prince George (a residential street). In addition, this proposal will severely challenge all delivery trucks to enter, turn around and exit within the confines of Prince George Street between Craig Street and the water.
2. Omission – The entry/exit was deemed to be too unattractive to put on Dock Street, but there was no mention of the ugly 3-4 feet high ramps that would be required to get the cars and buses on top of the garage and to the hotel and Watermark facilities. Note that the proposed traffic flow of buses would be almost identical to the preferred flow of vehicular traffic.
3. Omission – The reason for proposing that the hotel complex and u/g garage be two separate but concurrent projects was not clearly explained. This seems like a first step toward trying to transfer the cost of underground parking required for the restaurant, ballroom and bar from the hotel complex to the u/g garage.
4. Stating that the hotel would only require 40 “designated” spaces is a misrepresentation that understates the 48 required by City Code and ignores the 254 spaces needed for the restaurant (75), ballroom (166) and bar (13). At \$50k/space, the proposal seems to presume that the total resulting \$13,000,000 cost would be allocated to the garage operated under a city/private partnership, resulting in public users paying an unnecessarily higher parking fee for those spaces and thereby putting a greater demand on free parking in the nearby residential areas.
5. Patrons of other downtown businesses would then pay a disproportionate share of the additional \$13 Million-garage costs. Following are some very rough estimates of facilities usages:

- a. Based on Hillman Garage which is essentially full on most weekends and special events with an average occupancy of about 85% over all weekends and 60% during week days, we might expect the u/g garage to be essentially full during weekends and have an average usage of 273 spaces or 67%
- b. Ballroom – If 50% of the space (Austin averages 60%) were occupied 50% of business hours, the average use of parking spaces by the Ballroom would be 42 spaces verses 166 when fully occupied.
- c. Restaurant – If 70% of the space were occupied 50% of business hours, the average use of parking spaces by the restaurant would be 26 spaces verses 75 when fully occupied.
- d. Bar – If 90% of the space were occupied 50% of business hours, the average use of parking spaces by the Bar would be 6 spaces verses 13 when fully occupied.

Based on these rough assumptions, the hotel with its 40-48 parking spaces plus the average usage by the ballroom, restaurant and bar would account for 114-122 spaces and other businesses 103 spaces (average number of used surface spaces).

Accordingly, it would appear that the hotel complex will experience 54% of the benefit of the u/g garage and should therefore be expected to pay the \$20 Million cost, since the City (residents) will be contributing \$10 Million worth of waterfront property.

In any event, user-parking rates will be high to finance the u/g garage, placing high demand on free parking in the nearby residential areas.

Carl Larkin
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