

Blonder Hotel & Underground Parking Garage At What Cost to the City?

Harvey Blonder is proposing that a Public/Private Partnership build a six-story hotel with 373 - 407 underground parking spaces on Dock Street as a replacement for the building temporarily used by the Annapolis Yacht Club, as well as the existing surface parking lot and parking along Dock Street. Mayor Gavin Buckley is reportedly endorsing the project.

The proposed Hotel would be 55 feet tall (USGS Elev. 62), with the elevator penthouse extending to 70 feet. The existing Harbor Master building would be eliminated. Ongoing discussions between the City, State, NSHOF and Blonder are considering whether to incorporate the Historic Burtis House, NSHOF and associated water rights. The Hotel and Underground Garage would be undertaken as two separate but concurrent projects.

A three-story structure in front of the Hotel would house a 5,000-square-foot restaurant with a two-story ballroom above it. The front of the restaurant would align with the Harbor Center Building on the NW side of Craig Street. At the point where this alignment intersects the harbor viewshed set forth in the City Dock Master Plan, the Building would need to be set back to maintain the view of the harbor.

The proposal includes two options for a two-level underground garage. The top of the garage would be at USGS Elevation 7 - about three feet above the existing boardwalk along Ego Alley. Both options would eliminate the Harbor Masters building and the existing 168 parking spaces, and the Hotel would use 136 of the new spaces. Ramps would allow up to 12 buses onto the top of the garage to deliver customers to Watermark's facilities at the edge of Susan Campbell Park and to deliver hotel customers to the Hotel Lobby. The 373-space option would have two entrances (Dock Street and Prince George Street) and add only 69 new parking spaces. The 407-space option would provide only one entrance off Prince George Street and add 103 new parking spaces. The 69-103 additional parking spaces will never replace the 425 spaces in the Hillman Garage.

The Office of the Harbor Master would be relocated to the upper level of the Hotel, and the shower and bathrooms would be relocated to the underground garage. Presumably the Visitor Center would be relocated within the Hotel.

The City's Storm Water Mitigation Project would need to be partially redesigned to accommodate the underground garage.

Participants who attended Workshop #4 led by architect Peter Fillat on January 27 offered the following concerns:

1. Height, scale and character of the building.

2. Disposition of the historic Burtis House.
3. Effect on the viewshed from various locations.
4. Water penetration of underground garage.
5. Traffic volumes and flow modifications.
6. Effect on environment during and after construction.
7. City's financial contribution to the projects in general, for an apparent return of only 69-103 parking spaces.
8. Increased costs to Annapolis residents.
9. Participation in the projects by the State.
10. Additional Financing Sources for the projects.
11. Qualifications and experience of design and construction companies and personnel.

At What Cost to the City?

To accommodate these proposed projects for a gain of only 69 - 103 new parking spaces, the City would give up control of approximately 60,000 SF of prime real estate valued at nearly \$9,000,000 (based upon what was paid at 110 Compromise Street) to the Public/Private Partnership plus about \$500,000 worth of wasted design work on the City Dock Flood Mitigation Project.

Will the City collect or waive the 7% Hotel Tax on the 143 rooms that could amount to approximately \$600,000 per year based on average room rates and occupancy.

Will Annual Property Tax and Hotel Tax (~ \$600,000) be levied against the Public/Private Partnership? If so, would the property tax be based upon current valuations – \$50,500 City Tax, \$42,500 County Tax and \$8,800 State Tax – or would it be based upon valuation of the improved property?

Will the City be required to pay the Public/Private Partnership rent for the Harbor Master's office housed in the Hotel and for the showers and bathrooms housed in the Underground Garage?

Learn More About the Proposed Projects

To learn more of what is being proposed, visit the architect's web site at <https://www.facebook.com/fillatplusarchitecture/>.

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