



Urban Times

# ARCHIVES

**FROM: JULY 2007**

**L**ARRY JONES'S PLAN TO FURTHER RE-develop the Chatham Arch property at the corner of East and Ninth streets has sparked a debate over the wisdom of putting a mixed-use development in what many folks see as a residential neighborhood.

The proposal – to renovate the one-story Chatham Center into a two-story structure with 10 upper-level apartments and 9,300-square-feet of commercial space facing East Street – has the official, but not wholehearted, support of the Chatham Arch Neighborhood Association.

Speaking during the June 6 hearing of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, CANA spokesman Tom Jones noted that the neighborhood vote was 20-19 in favor of Jones's plan. But he also stressed that many neighbors have concerns over parking issues and the commercial aspect of the plan – especially the precedent it might set because the adjacent property to the south, the former Day Nursery facility, is on the market and likely to be redeveloped soon.

"Nobody wants commercial development on that site," Jones said.

Comments from the commissioners included problems with design, as well as parking – but the June 6 debate revolved around the more-philosophic issue of land-use appropriateness, as well as the precedent the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission might be setting with the vote.

Those worries resulted in the proposal being continued to the IHPC's July 11 meeting.

City-County Councilor Jackie Nytes set the tone of the June 6 debate when she spoke strongly in favor of the proposal. "I am very supportive of mixed-use development," she said, noting that such development is needed to establish a vibrant, healthy, urban environment.

Noting the explosion of the Downtown residential market, she added, "We're struggling to make sure we're also developing an equivalent variety of supporting services for people's daily lives – especially ones they can walk to."

Nytes, who said she is working with CANA officials on long-term parking solutions, said the neighborhood should

## **Debating the issue: Multi-use in historic neighborhoods?**

### **Commission seeks to set the right tone with Chatham Arch project**

not shun non-residential development. She also criticized a compromise plan reached between Jones and the neighborhood regarding what businesses would be allowed in the new commercial spaces.

Negotiations between those two parties resulted in an agreement which would ban a long list of retail uses, from service stations, restaurants and bars to bakeries, convenience markets, delicatessens and markets. "I wish they had been a little braver," Nytes said, referring to the neighborhood. "I think it's short-sighted. We need more opportunities for bakeries, for delis, for ice cream shops or flower shops. These kinds of things help make our neighborhoods well-served."

Several neighbors who testified at the June 6 hearing disagreed, noting they had invested in the neighborhood believing it would continue to be residential in nature. Testimony



Architect's drawing submitted by Larry Jones

Larry Jones's plans for the Chatham Center include a partially "green" roof. Although members of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission are not completely satisfied with design revisions made to the original plans, the discussion at the June hearing revolved around land use, not architecture.

also involved the problems created by the existing parking lot serving the Chatham Center and the Babeca building immediately to the north, which Jones also owns. Those properties back up to the garages serving townhomes facing Park Avenue.

The existing structure was built in 1971 as the Riley Nursing Home, a 40-bed facility built on a site that had historically been occupied by residential structures. The nursing home was closed when Jones bought the property; in 2002 he received a variance to use the facility as 20 leasable spaces for artists, office and meeting uses and a gallery space with retail sales.

The Chatham Center was for several years home to the LAMP Gallery.

The new development would be served by 20 parking spaces on site, with another 22 spaces available on East Street to serve customers of the businesses. He had arranged to lease another 15 spaces in the nearby American Red Cross parking lot to serve employees at the first-level businesses – a concept not well-received by members of the commission.

Commissioner Susan Williams, herself a resident of Chatham Arch, pointed to the negative situation the neighborhood has faced near the Indianapolis Public School trans-



Mixed-use can be very successful. I am supportive of that idea – but a lot of questions need to be resolved.”

William Browne Jr.

portation center along College Avenue. She noted that bus drivers have dedicated space to park their cars, but instead use spaces in the neighborhood which are more convenient to them.

The parking issue, however, is not a deal-breaker, in Williams's estimation. She said parking stressors currently exist throughout the neighborhood, such as the one created on Phoenix Theatre performance nights.

Commissioner William Browne Jr. concurred with Williams's senti-

ments, as well as those of Nytes. He said parking issues must be addressed properly, but that he was not overly concerned about that issue. “Mixed-use can be very successful. I am supportive of that idea – but a lot of questions need to be resolved.”

Commissioner Steve Tuchman pointed out that, if this project is denied, Jones can continue to operate the Chatham Center under the existing variance. The problems caused by the existing parking situation would not go away, nor would the property likely be converted to residential.

Tuchman, who voiced concern over several elements of the project, said he was not as concerned over the idea of mixed-use, and in fact thinks the agreement between Jones and the neighborhood is too restrictive because it limits

## **LAND USE / page 3**

hours of business to between 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Other commissioners agreed with Tuchman's assessment.

Williams, meanwhile, said she agreed with neighbors who were concerned over the pending redevelopment of the Day Nursery site. Another factor, she said, was the pending redevelopment of the old Coca-Cola plant now serving Indianapolis Public Schools, on the other side of the neighborhood.

"You can say all day that we're not setting a precedent, but of course we are," Williams said. "This is important to the future of Chatham Arch. There are multiple significant issues to discuss before I'm ready to vote."

Williams said the IHPC needs more information on how the neighborhood and the immediate neighbors are going to be protected. She said that if the IHPC is going to support the project, "we need to set the bar high. This isn't there yet."

Browne agreed. "We need to set the bar high," he said. "This is the type of use IHPC is going to see on a regular basis."

**– Bill Brooks**