



November 2013

Frequently Asked Questions: Beaufort Marina Parking Lot Redevelopment

1. Why redevelop the Downtown Marina parking lot property?

Since the mid-1980s, people have asked why this waterfront property, with scenic views of the Beaufort bay and marshes, has been used only for parking. Today there are options being explored to provide more parking, in more appropriate locations, in downtown Beaufort. Redeveloping this location will be key to jumpstarting renewed interest in the downtown Beaufort shopping district and boosting the economy.

The property anchors a corner of the core commercial district and serves as a gateway to the Bay Street entertainment row, Carteret Street's restaurant row, and to The Point's historic homes.

The public/private partnership is envisioned to spur new economic growth in the western end of downtown Beaufort's retail district and to create new draws for area residents. The approximate four-acre site is between Bay Street and the Beaufort River. It is adjacent to the City-owned Downtown Marina, three public parks -- Freedom Park, the expansive Bluff which serves as a park and the recently renovated Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park -- and the downtown shopping and entertainment district.

The City adopted a master plan for the historic downtown roughly two years ago. Extensive analysis conducted as part of that plan's preparation showed that this area, also referred to as Sector One in the Civic Master Plan, has been underperforming financially for some time. Even though tourism is up, gross revenue reported by all businesses in Sector One has been flat at about \$43 million to \$45 million per year for the past five years. Each year, though, the costs to deliver services to downtown exceed the revenue generated by nearly \$600,000.

An extensive analysis of the City's retail, restaurant and hospitality economics by Seth Harry Associates identified redevelopment of the marina site as the best opportunity for making downtown more relevant to regional and local consumers. It also offers a significant opportunity to strengthen the business climate by attracting consumers with higher disposable incomes to shop, to work and to live downtown, which should result in better operating results for the City. And finally, it may provide additional opportunities for "downtown" residences which demographic research indicates is more attractive to this generation.

2. Who are the developers?

A partnership of a Greenville, SC real estate development and investment firm and the team responsible for Spring Island, Chechessee Creek Club in southern Beaufort County and a number of successful developments/redevelopments outside the region, earned the nod from the Beaufort Redevelopment Commission and Beaufort City Council to lead the redevelopment of the underutilized parking lot at the Beaufort Downtown Marina.

The Furman Co., Development LLC will act as developer on behalf of Historic Marina Partners LLC comprised of Furman and Chaffin/ Light.

The Furman Co., established in 1888, is a leading full service real estate firm based in Greenville. They deliver comprehensive real estate solutions including commercial brokerage, property and facilities management, insured assets and risk management, development services and investment advisory services, supported by proprietary market research and extensive regional market expertise.

Jim Chaffin is the co-founder with James W. Light of Chaffin/Light Associates. With over 40 years of experience in resort/ recreation community development, Chaffin and Light have developed communities in Snowmass Village, CO, the Resort Semiahmoo near Blaine Washington, Lake Arrowhead, California and Spring Island in southern Beaufort County.

Spring Island, in particular, has received numerous awards and national acclaim for its environmental sensitivity, including the 2000 Urban Land Institute Awards for Excellence. Chaffin, a Beaufort-area resident, is a past Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Urban Land Institute, a non-profit research and education institute that is dedicated to responsible land use and supported and directed by its 40,000+ members. Chaffin has also served on the Board of Historic Beaufort Foundation.

3. Is the City selling the Marina?

This option has been discussed with City Council and they have expressed a strong preference to retain public ownership of the Marina. The City has applied for and received a grant that will result in \$130,000 in upgrades to the marina's electrical service, installation of a mooring field and improvements to safety systems. The City recently received a state grant which, with additional federal funds, should enable the installation of a \$400,000+ day dock near the marina.

The City also has applied for a \$300,000 federal grant to repair the marina's docks. These improvements should substantially address deferred maintenance issues at the marina. They are being made with the expectation that better operation at the marina and landside development should substantially increase the revenue the City sees from this public asset.

4. What about parking?

For many years, parking has been an issue in downtown Beaufort. With the pending redevelopment of the marina lot, the City Council, Redevelopment Commission and developers are looking at fresh opportunities to improve parking – including the possibility of a parking garage. Public input will be sought as the options become more clearly defined and the costs/financing needs are known.

This is a major point for Beaufort City Council and the Redevelopment Commission as this marina lot project moves forward. City Council understands that should an acceptable project

come forth, such a project must have plans to mitigate the loss of any parking from the Marina parking lot. This could involve a garage or additional on-street parking in close proximity to shopping and dining.

5. Will the public have a chance to provide input and opinions about what kind of development happens on this property?

City Council has been clear from the very start that public input is critical to the success of this project. Council told the Redevelopment Commission and the development team that it won't accept or approve plans that haven't had proper public exposure. The Redevelopment Commission and this development team are committed to actively seeking community input and involvement. This will be done through multiple public meetings and gatherings as well as other methods.

6. Who is in charge of the redevelopment project?

A Memorandum of Understanding between the City Council, Redevelopment Commission and the development team will guide the process. The Redevelopment Commission, chaired by Jon Verity, and Alan Dechovitz, who led the Commission's Marina Committee, will work closely with Steve Navarro and Jim Chaffin, principals of the Historic Marina Partners LLC development team.

City leaders are committed to preserving the "sense of place" that makes Beaufort unique. At the same time, they are committed to helping improve the local economy, providing new reasons for locals and visitors to spend time in the downtown district, and to increasing the local tax base so that Beaufort can continue to provide the services expected by its residents.

7. Is this supposed to boost the downtown economy, be a tourist draw, and/or be something that locals can enjoy?

Yes to all of those! The four-acre site is a key location at a corner of downtown Beaufort, and can serve as a gateway to the shopping district and to the National Historic Landmark District. With its location on the Beaufort River and Intracoastal Waterway, there is a vast and largely untapped market for a hotel/restaurant, residential opportunities and other shops that will create jobs, tax revenue and foot traffic throughout downtown.

8. Is the Marina site zoned properly for the kind of development being considered?

No. The marina site is zoned Conservation Preservation which precludes development and business operations. This zoning is obviously incorrect as the marina, its convenience store, and the carriage and boat tour companies already operate from this location. In December 2013, the City staff will begin the process of correcting the zoning on the site to General Commercial, consistent with the rest of Bay Street regardless of what future development occurs

9. How can I stay informed and involved as this project moves forward?

Check the City's website, www.cityofbeaufort.org, for regular updates. You can also sign up to receive updates by email – go to the city's website to sign up. We'll also promote public meetings and information sessions through local media.

10. What will happen to the public boat ramp?

At this time, we don't know. What we do know is there is currently inadequate parking for cars and boat trailers at the boat ramp, so public access is limited as it is. Any plan for redeveloping the marina parking lot will have to take into consideration future use for the existing boat landing.

11. What will happen to the carriage embarkation and debarkation area?

We do not know. What we do know is that the City has an obligation to provide access for the carriage companies and their customers. Such may be woven into a plan, or moved to an equally convenient spot depending on what the developers and public decide about the future of the existing space.

12. Does this project include the proposed day dock?

No. The day dock already has been approved conceptually and the city is securing grant funds to pay for it.

13. Should the developers find residential the best use, or a primary use, will this limit the public's access to the waterfront and to the marina?

No. Public access to the water won't be limited by something new.

14. Does the City plan to sell the land to a developer?

Before any development is approved, the City must be compensated fairly for use of the public land. Selling is an option, but City Council is, at this time, reluctant to sell, so a lease option must be considered before any decision is made.