October 19, 2018

Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency

**October IURA Questions – Green Street Garage Redevelopment Proposers**

Newman Development and Visum Development submit the following responses to the questions provided by IURA on October 5, 2018 for the Green Street Garage Redevelopment Project:

**Separate Housing Entrances - Proposed separate entrances/elevators for ‘workforce’ and affordable housing components of the project within the same building are proposed that potentially stigmatizes lower income residents. Even though the unit sizes and finishes will be comparable, how can a concern that the project creates a “poor door” be mitigated in the project?**

If it is determined that it is preferable and in the best interest of the project and residents to have a single combined entrance to the residential portion of the building, the project can be redesigned to accommodate that.

INHS does not believe that their private entrance creates a negative stigma. In their initial planning, programming and design of the project, INHS requested a separate dedicated entrance to the section of the building they would own. They were pleased with the location and layout of the entrance, which is shown presenting on the new plaza area on the east end in front of the Cinemapolis and planned art park. Typically, INHS has a management office and reception area in the entrance section of their properties where residents and their guests are greeted by a staff member. This supports the quality of management services, promotes communication and enhances the quality of the community. INHS does not see a negative connotation with the proposed private entrance and find in their communities that people enjoy where they live and are not concerned about income.

In considering any possible alternative design for the entrance, there are certain requirements that INHS will be required to meet in connection with their financing, where it is important that their building function on an independent and standalone basis, ensuring that nothing related to other elements of the building owned by different entities could ever negatively impact the financing or operations of their section of the building.

An alternative first floor plan is attached, which has a single residential entrance at the southwest corner of the building, which includes management offices and a common lobby area. Our Design Team is prepared to discuss the proposed design and consider other concepts that may contribute to an improved and more successful project.
**Feasibility** - Your housing partner INHS has several potential 9% LIHTC projects in their development pipeline. Please confirm that your housing partner is committed to submit a funding application for this project for the 2019 Unified Funding round if you are designated as the preferred developer, even if it may compete against another INHS 9% LIHTC application.

INHS is committed to submitting this application when it is ready regardless of the other projects that are in its pipeline. In addition, the development team has investigated a way for INHS to submit a 4% As of Right Tax Credit Proposal by adding two floors to the INHS section of the building. These two floors would add 25 units bringing the INHS affordable housing count up to 75 units. This would be sufficient for a 4% Tax Credit proposal eliminating the need to apply for 9% tax credits in a competitive round.

The attached building elevation shows how the additional two floors would be added to the building. The building floor plans also show how the building could function well for residents, proving convenient access throughout the building, while also providing the appropriate operational structure.

**Additional Affordable Units** – as discussed in our initial RFP submission document, the Newman/Visum Team is prepared to work with the IURA on alternative building designs and financing structures that could provide more apartments in targeted or prioritized income bands. For example, if it desirable to include more units for residents with Area Median Incomes in the 70% to 90% range, we will work with IURA, the City and other stakeholders to pursue Grant funds or other sources that could reduce project costs and thus provide lower rents. In addition, if it is desirable and beneficial to achieve greater density with more efficient unit size, our Design Team will work with IURA in a well-coordinated programming and design charrette process to consider alternative floor plans and building features that could achieve improved, more desirable and more affordable options.

**Local Labor** - At the public hearing two local union construction trade spokespersons expressed support for the Vecino proposal though other projects have indicated their intent to utilize high percentages of local labor. Is there any further information you would like to furnish regarding local construction labor participation in your project?

Given that Newman Development and Visum Development are both local/regional companies, our principals and employees are already established and actively engaged in the community with countless professional and personal relationships that will promote the involvement of local businesses and workers in the project. Ensuring local participation in our projects is not a matter of fulfilling mandated requirements, it is part of our cultures.

Newman and Visum each have a long and well-established history for utilizing local workers and contractors, local supplies and vendors and local professional firms for our development projects. Newman and Visum also have had strong representation of union labor on many projects and have worked with local unions to increase the participation level of union contractors through special programs. In addition, Newman and Visum frequently make extra efforts to further involve local contractors, vendors and suppliers and encourage all firms to utilize as much local labor as possible.

Local support and participation is important on many levels. We are very proud of our Design Team, which is comprised largely of long-established Ithaca firms that have made significant contributions to
numerous projects and community benefits over many years. These firms also happen to have exemplary qualifications and are firms with whom we have excellent previous work experience. We also have discussed the project with Tompkins Trust, who has expressed a strong interest in participating in the project financing.

The matter of local experience and engagement is a significant consideration for any project in Ithaca. The involvement of local workers and businesses is extremely important in ensuring that there is broad community benefit for any publicly-supported project. It is our intention to bid the project to all subcontractors, vendors and suppliers that are interested in participating in the project with the intention of selecting those firms that can provide high quality workmanship, competitive pricing, and pay competitive wages with a commitment to prioritizing local workers.

**Constructability – Please verify affordable constructability of housing above the existing center parking decks.**

As noted in our RFP submission document and discussed in our interview, our Design Team reviewed a broad breadth of issues and options for the existing Green Street site and garages as we considered the appropriate approach for redeveloping the property. As we also noted, our Garage Consultant and Engineer, WGI (formerly Carl Walker), is the structural engineer that designed the current Center Garage and also conducted an in-depth analysis of the East and West Garages, providing a program of repairs and improvements that were needed to sustain the existing structures. As part of our investigation of possible future development options, our Team explored a great variety of ideas and design alternatives, including the prospect of building on top of the existing parking structures. In connection with the above-posed question, we thought it would be helpful to pass along a few of the relevant WGI comments on certain of the proposed design scenarios consider by our Team.

Following are comments and analysis provided by WGI in connection with their recent review of future development options for the Green Street garages:

- **Add 4-Parking Levels to Center Garage** – the Center Section was designed to accommodate an additional 4-levels of parking at a future time. To accommodate this future vertical expansion, the foundations were designed to support the additional loading, and the ramping system and entry-exiting lanes were designed to accommodate the additional vehicles.

  Based on the Garage design adding 4 additional levels of parking was determined to be feasible and desirable.

- **Add 2-Parking Levels Plus 2-Residential Levels to Center Garage** – taking into account the live load requirements for 2 new parking levels that would conform to the existing structural design, plus the framing system for 2 new residential levels, including the transfer beams required to align with the garage structure, plus the roof system, plus common spaces the current garage load capacity would be exceeded by at least 15% in living areas and more in high load areas.

  Adding additional parking plus residential floors above the East Garage did not appear to be practical.
• **Other Considerations for Adding Residential Occupancy above the Center Garage:**
  
  o **Residential Elevators** – adding elevators within the current structure would result in a loss of parking. Adding elevators external to the structure may encroach on private or other public property and may conflict with existing public uses.
  
  o **Residential Stairs** – if existing Garage stairs are planned to be used, the stair towers will need to be fully enclosed to achieve required fire separation, which is counter to standard parking structure passive security design, which recommends open/glass. If new internal stairs are planned, parking will be lost. External stairs may also encroach on private or public property and may conflict with public uses.

• **Adding Parking or Residential above East Garage** – the East Garage is not designed for vertical expansion.

  Vertical expansion of the East Garage did not appear to be practical.
APPROX. ADDITIONAL 26 MORE UNITS GAINED BY ADDING TWO FLOORS TO RESIDENTIAL BUILDING BAY. DESIGN IMPACTS TO BE STUDIED.