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NEWS

Three Lively Proposals Look to Liven up Blighted Pier 5

by [Seth Daniel](#) • January 21, 2021 • [0 Comments](#)

The Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) told the development community they would need to be creative with any proposals from the blighted, condemned Pier 5 in the Navy Yard, and three entities did just that proposing innovative plans for mixed-use reuses of the pier.

All three proposals will be reviewed in a public meeting on Feb. 8, and full submissions

are now

available on the project website.



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The proposal by 6M Development uses part of the old Pier 5 as an anchor to a new floating residential community.



The Charlestown Marina and partners propose a floating community with live-on vessels and 55 new boat slips after the existing Pier 5 is demolished.



The development team of Urbanica looks to re-build Pier 5 and develop a fully-affordable community with an Urban Farm roof, a grocery store and a large public park/ice rink on the waterfront.

Morgan McDaniel of the BPDA said they were excited to get three complete proposals for the pier, including two that put forward Boston's first-ever floating residential communities.

"We were excited to get these proposals _____ and all three are for housing on the pier," said McDaniel. "One was for affordable housing, including a grocery store and retail space on a re-built pier. The other two are floating residential communities. We're really excited about those and will have to take a careful look at them as we don't usually review that kind of project."

BPDA's Devin Quirk said they were thrilled with the interest and the thought put into the proposals, and he noted Pier 5 and Building 108 – both in the RFP stage now – represent the final pieces of the Navy Yard.

"With this and the Building 108 RFP processes, these are the last two publicly owned blighted properties in the Navy Yard," he said. "We're finalizing the implementation of the Navy Yard re-development vision when it was turned over to the City in the 1970s."

The three proposals come from Urbanica (Kamran Zahedi of Roxbury), Navy Blue LLC (by Charles Lagasse of the Charlestown Marina), and 6M Development (by William Caulder, a North End hotel developer).

In a nod to the new priorities at the BPDA, all three developers stressed heavily their commitment and plans to include minorities, women and veterans in their proposals.

•Urbanica –

The Urbanica proposal is the only one that envisions rebuilding the pier, which comes at quite an extensive cost and re-building a totally affordable project with 89 income restricted units. The project would have a public promenade around it and a public park at the end that would double as an outdoor waterfront ice rink in the winter. The roof would be publicly accessible and would have scores of community garden plots to form an Urban Farm project. The retail space would include a grocery store that would face Flagship Wharf and restaurant retail space further out on the pier.

Partnering with Urbanica is National Housing Partnership Foundation, Ground Air Inc. and the Minority Crowd Fund. Zahedi has designed and built several of the more unique buildings in the City over the past several years, just finishing up work on residential buildings at Forest Hills in Jamaica Plain.

Urbanica wrote that the Yard was made up of working-class tradesmen up until the closure of the Yard in the 1970s. Since then, they said, it has had a dearth of affordable properties. They hope to change that.

“When the yard closed in 1974, the yard was still full of this working-class population,” read the letter. “Since then, there has been more housing built in the Navy Yard as more and more residential projects and communities have been added across the waterfront. However, not many people can actually afford to live there. We believe that Pier 5 is a unique and exciting opportunity to create housing that is affordable for a broader group of workers in Charlestown and Boston, and to maintain a healthy social fabric of mixed-income groups of the area.”

•Navy Blue LLC –

The Navy Blue proposal is headed up by Chuck Lagasse of the Charlestown Marina, who has a long history of reviving dilapidated piers in the Navy Yard – as recently as last summer in building out the Pier 6 Marina. Joining Lagasse is Parent + Diamond firm and Urban Spaces.

Navy Blue describes their approach as “aquatectural” in that they plan to raze and recycle the existing pier – which is condemned and must be rebuilt or demolished. The pier would be replaced with marina walkways that feature overhead solar canopies leading to 55 boat slips.

“The slips will be fitted with ‘green’ live- aboard vessels with independent living quarters ranging in size from 530 to 2,100 square feet,” read the submission. “In the same way that the Navy Yard has evolved from its original military purpose to become one of Boston’s most vibrant communities, NAVY BLUE will mirror this spirit of transition as we participate in the adaptation along the waterfront from industrial to other uses. Furthermore, our program supports the Climate Ready Boston initiative by planning for the impacts of climate change and building a program with a resilient future.”

The program features a year-round marina community with a floating pavilion that would be the community gathering space and a stop for water shuttles. It would be Boston’s first, fully-floating residential community and a concept the BPDA has been excited to potentially replicate if it works.

“Our approach to development execution is as innovative as our floating community concept,” read the submission. “Our commitment extends to every stage of the development cycle, including ownership, pre- development, construction, and ongoing daily marina operations.”

The 6M Development proposals comes from William Caulder, who is in the process of developing a hotel in the North End. The Co-Developer is Gosder Cherilus of Bastion Companies. In addition, the team also includes Charlestown known quantities Al Carrier and Gregg Nolan of the Nolan Group.

Their approach would also be a floating community, but with a partial demolition of the existing pier – using selective demolition to preserve parts that will serve as an anchor to the floating pieces. The project contemplates 138 units of housing with restaurant space and passive parks and a floating salt marsh – all built out in many phases of construction.

The design seeks to bring the canals of Amsterdam to Boston’s Inner Harbor.

“By repositioning Pier 5 in the Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston, Baca Architects and WaterStudio.NL (WaterStudio.Blue) provide an intelligent, sustainable and adaptable solution to changing water levels,” read the letter. “By selectively demolishing and retaining parts of the pier to create four sturdy islands that become anchoring points for WaterStudio.Blue’s unique floating homes, the pier merges the canal feeling of Amsterdam with the dynamic tidal range of Boston’s Inner Harbor.”

The new floating community would only rise about 35 feet above the existing pier and thus would not block and water views from existing structures – something very important to the Flagship Wharf residents behind Pier 5.

"The lowest floor is half a story below the waterline with windows above and will sit within the floatation unit that provides buoyancy to the rest of the structure," read the submission.

All three proposals, as stated above, will be reviewed and discussed with the community at the online Feb. 8 meeting. Quirk said they hope to get extensive community input on the proposals and hope to have a developer designated by late spring.