

CHELSEA FORBES LOFTS

Site Details: Mixed Use Development , **Funding:** Private Developer
17.7 acres of waterfront
Date(s): Summer 2005-
Zoning : Waterfront with Special Permits
Goals: Revitalize Waterfront; Increase Tax Base; Provide Market Rate Housing



Background

Forbes Lofts is an ongoing project on a 17.7 acre waterfront site in Chelsea. The area was previously the home to industrial uses, including an old printing factory. Because the site is designated as a brownfield, the project began with site clean up in the summer of 2005. Currently the project is on hold due to permitting challenges and a tough economic market. However, when completed, it will include 350 loft units, as well as 20,000 square feet of commercial, restaurant, and office space in addition to public green space. The developer was motivated by a unique architectural and environmental design and wanted to appeal to a cultural creative. They knew the space would attract those who had deeper psychological reasons for wanting to purchase a new home; those who cared about environmental and global issues. The city of Chelsea saw the benefits of a “green” development on a site that was previously only marginally used. The development would greatly increase their tax base and fulfill a



Rendering of the completed Chelsea Lofts



Prior Industrial Use at the Site

need for market-rate housing. The developer, Urban Design and Development, has undergone a year of clean up including deconstructing buildings that were no longer viable, clearing out debris, and repairing the sea wall. They have also replanted a neighboring salt marsh environment and conducted asbestos and lead paint abatement. Building X, a historic four-story building on site, has been converted into sixty eight lofts and includes an open air breezeway that enhances natural light and fresh air throughout. In the next three phases of construction, more of the existing buildings will be converted into residential units, including the Canal Row Building and the Mill Creek House. New buildings will be constructed for residential purposes as well. The developer will also build commercial spaces and a new restaurant, the Boiler Room Restaurant and Bar. They will construct rain catchment pools and fields as well as a Harbor Pavilion, greenhouses, an observation deck up the windmill, and a central meadow.



Windmill on site

Site Development

Development Process

The major issues that the project has faced include a complex permitting process and funding difficulties that have caused the developer to refinance several times. While there were relatively few concerns from the community regarding the development, some did express anxiety after the windmill was initially put up. In response to these community questions, the town held a public meeting where the developer explained the benefits of the windmill and fortunately there were very few complaints afterwards. The town, however, did introduce a new wind ordinance that impedes the possibility of putting up new windmills.



Environmental Management Plan

The area was zoned “waterfront” which would not necessarily allow for the density and mixed use that the developer wanted to introduce. To allow for the development, special permits were issued. These permits specified that a significant portion of the site be reserved for public access, sitting areas, and green space which would be a benefit to all Chelsea residents. The project is funded entirely by the private developer.



Site before development



Site After Development

Forbes Lofts and Metro Future Goals

Transportation Choices:

The community will have access to upgraded hybrid plug-in cars, water taxis to Boston, a shuttle directly to the Beachmont T station, and a ride sharing bulletin.

Sustainable Growth Patterns:

The lofts incorporate many green aspects, including an on-site wind turbine, solar panels, water space preserved for migratory birds and fish, the use of storm water for flushing toilets, and the restoration of wetlands and a salt marsh. In addition to receiving half of its energy from renewable resources, the site will also reuse old factory buildings as loft space and incorporate renewable natural materials.

Community Vitality:

In the plans is a paved boardwalk that will rest on top of the new seawall and provide all Chelsea residents with access to the waterfront. The developer will also provide park benches and other green space in an attempt to inspire other similar spaces for recreation on the waterfront.

Contact Information

For more information about Forbes Lofts contact developer Blair Galinsky at blair@forbeslofts.com.

“The purchase of these condominiums satisfies the buyer’s need to tell the world that they care about the world” - Blair Galinsky, Developer, Urban Design and Development