

**Jefferson unveils a revised garage proposal The revamped plan eliminates curb cuts on Chestnut Street, among other changes. It will need seven zoning variances.**

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by Linda K. Harris

Last summer, after two lengthy hearings about a proposed Center City parking garage for Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Zoning Board Chairman David L. Auspitz sent the developers away, exhorting them to come up with a better approach to issues of function and aesthetics.

Yesterday, hospital executives and InterPark, the developer, revealed their revised plans for the controversial garage in the 900 block of Chestnut Street, which they will present to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The date has not been set.

The new version of the parking garage would have a white cast-stone facade. Curb cuts on Chestnut Street have been eliminated, and entrances have been moved to Ninth, 10th and Sansom Streets and exits to Ninth and Sansom. Garbage pickup and deliveries have been provided in the rear.

These issues were raised during the summer hearings. The original plan called for a garage exit and garbage pickup on Chestnut Street. The original proposed facade was of brick and terra-cotta.

The garage, to be built by InterPark, a Chicago-based national parking company owned by General Electric, would require seven zoning variances, including one for its size - 700 spaces. The city code does not allow garages with more than 500 spaces.

The first floor of the eight-level garage fronting on Chestnut Street calls for 13,250 square feet of retail shops, touted as a spur to the revitalization of shopping and pedestrian traffic in the area. The area could be carved into a maximum of 11 shops or restaurants.

Jefferson has signed an agreement to convert the first-floor offices of the Gibbon Building, which fronts the adjacent 1000 block of Chestnut, into shops as well. The block is filled now with offices, its large windows plastered with posters.

Jefferson University and its hospital need the parking to accommodate their expanding campus and medical services, hospital executives say. The medical complex employs 11,530 people and brought in revenue of \$500 million in the 2003 fiscal year.

"We're very anxious to get this under way," said Ronald E. Bowlan, Jefferson's vice president for facilities management.

The new design was unveiled to the Washington Square West Civic Association's governmental affairs committee on Oct. 28.

"We thought it was an improvement," said Judith Kaplow Applebaum, president of the civic association. "Definitely the fact that they're not . . . exiting on Chestnut Street is an improvement."

The garage is opposed by the Design Advocacy Group, a consortium of about 90 design professionals in the city, and others. The group has said it would prefer to have the garage on the Sansom Street side of the block.

George L. Claflen Jr., a representative of the group, said members would meet with InterPark to see the new plan.

"We expressed profound skepticism that anything short of substantially altering the plan would not be much of an accomplishment in urban-design terms," Claflen said. And, he added, while moving the curb cuts off Chestnut Street is an improvement, "that's an improvement to a suspect concept."

InterPark, which owns the land east of the garage on that block of Chestnut, wants to sell that piece when and if the garage is built.

"The day the garage opens, this is for sale," said Carl S. Primavera, who represents InterPark.

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