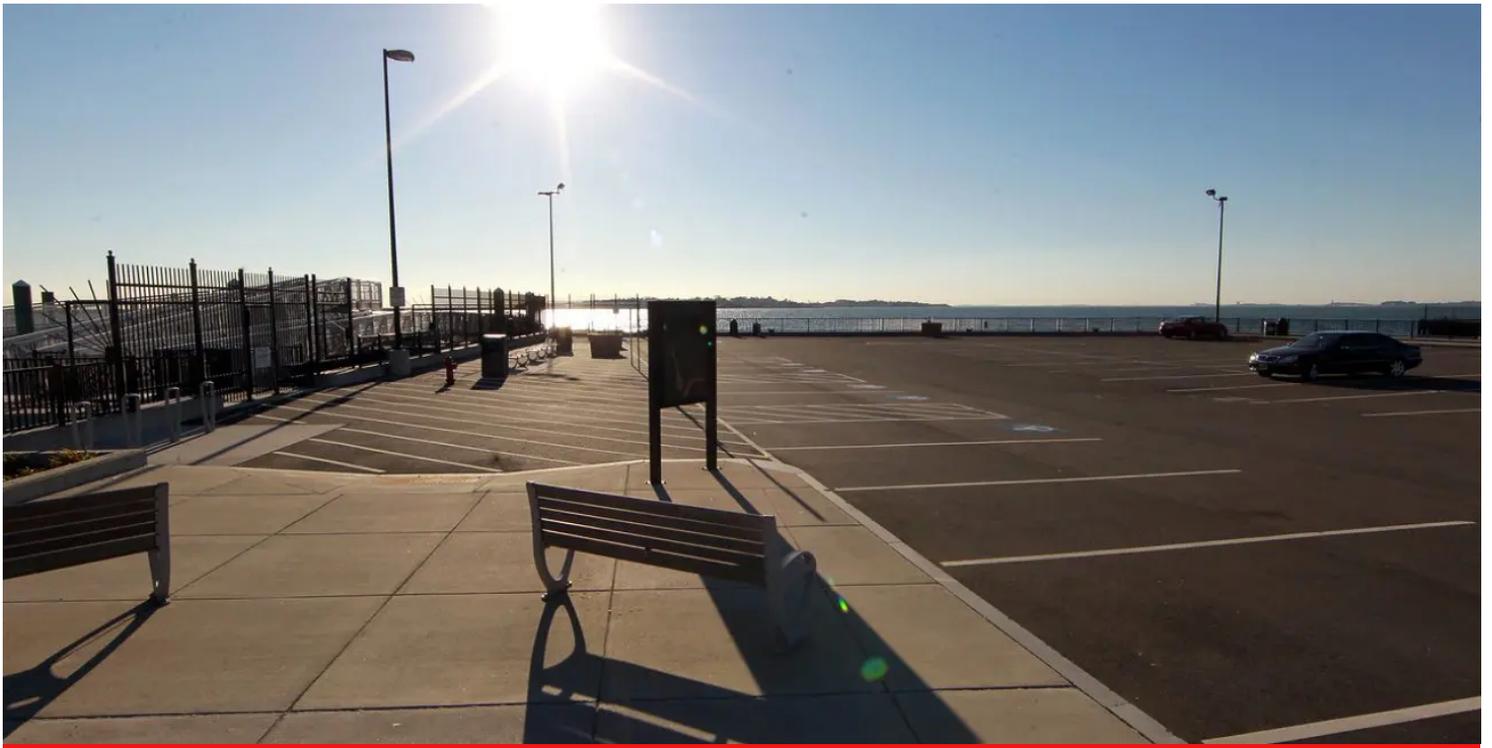


BUSINESS, LIFESTYLE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, NEWS

EDIC FERRY TERMINAL ATTRACTS DEVELOPER ATTENTION

BY ANTHONY CAMMALLERI | July 25, 2022



The prospective development of the vacant waterfront lot surrounding the ferry terminal on Blossom Street was pitched by Utile, a Boston-based architectural design firm. (Item file photo)

LYNN — At an Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC/Lynn) meeting Monday morning, designers from Utile, a Boston-based architectural design firm, pitched a semi-industrial, semi-commercial outline for prospective development of the vacant waterfront lot surrounding the ferry terminal on Blossom Street.

EDIC Executive Director James Cowdell said that Mayor Jared Nicholson asked him and EDIC Chairman Charles J. Gaeta, who also serves as the executive director of the city's housing authority, to file a request for proposal for the lot's development planning. Before proposing anything however, the EDIC brought in Utile Principal Matthew Littell to pitch a design, because the lot is one of the state's 11 designated port areas reserved for marine industrial uses and must adhere to myriad state regulations.

"Because of all the development that's been going on on the water now, in the interest of development on the water, there's been a lot of interest regarding the lot of land that we own next to the ferry site. The mayor asked Charlie and I to consider putting an RFP together," Cowdell said. "It's a state designation, so there are limitations to what we can do there, so prior to the RFP, Charlie, myself and the mayor thought it would be good to bring in an expert to let us know what our options are."

The push for development in the area comes over a week after the state Legislature set aside \$28 million for a ferry pilot program connecting the city's ferry terminal with those in Salem, Gloucester, Winthrop, Quincy, and Boston. The program would serve as an alternative for commuters staring down the closure of Lynn's commuter rail station in the fall, and the closure of the Sumner Tunnel beginning next summer.

Littell's design included construction of a waterside restaurant, a harbor master office, ferry ticketing office, boat valet docking, and an emergency rescue training center. Littell said that DPAs are often left vacant because of a lack of qualifiable uses, and that he's working with the EDIC to create structures that are not only useful for the city, but DPA allowable.

"Industrial uses are sometimes hard to come by, so you often see some of these parcels remaining vacant because there isn't really a lot of commercially viable waterfront uses," he said. "The series of uses that we envision were based on conversations we had with the EDIC. One kind of anchoring use that we think would be allowable is a sort of building that would have a combination of an emergency rescue training center, a harbor master's office, a ferry ticketing office, all these things we believe would be allowable in a DPA and might serve to anchor the uses on both of those sites."

Although the state generally discourages casual pedestrian access in DPA parcels, Littell said that the presence of a ferry dock at the Blossom Street lot makes it possible for walkways to be built as points of access to the ferry terminal.

"In a non-DPA parcel, in other words, one that doesn't have industrial uses, the state would normally encourage a harbor walk for pedestrian waterfront access to the public. In the case of a DPA, generally, casual pedestrian access is discouraged because," Littell said. "In this case, because one of the uses is a ferry terminal, there is the possibility that it wouldn't be a harbor walk, or big landscape piece per se, but could be characterized as a point of pedestrian access to the ferry terminal."

Littell added that since the ferry terminal might be capable of opening the DPA to public access, a restaurant, so long as it does not interfere with the lot's industrial purposes, might be allowable as a supporting use.

"We [could] put a destination restaurant or something above the harbor manager's office, it would be situated above, where it wouldn't really interfere with the other uses. It would draw people to the waterfront as a destination, it could complement commuters coming on and off the ferry, for instance," Littell said. "That particular piece of this idea would have to be considered a supporting use."

Cowdell said that he has received calls from developers to build highrises and other sorts of buildings along the old ferry terminal site, but that since it's a DPA, it can not and should not interfere with or stray from the ferry service.

"When EDIC acquired this land, how many years ago was that? Over 10, it was always to go in conjunction with the ferry site. Whatever goes there, we always have to make it work with the ferry terminal, it has to be an addition. It can not impact the public boat launch area, it can not impact the ferry, which more and more is looking feasible these days," Cowdell said. "We're getting calls all the time from developers who just want to buy it and put a highrise there, which in my opinion, would be a horrible use."

Anthony Cammalleri can be reached at anthony@itemlive.com.