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Wednesday, November 12, 2008

Zoning overhaul commission opens up its work

The Philadelphia Zoning Code Commission will hold a kickoff meeting tonight from 6 to 8 in City Council Chambers in City Hall to discuss the process to update the city's zoning code. **METRO**

Developing Situations

Comments? Tips? Contact Developing Situations reporter Solomon D. Leach at sleach@metro.us.



A whole new direction?

The shape-up

● **10 Rittenhouse Square:** ARC Wheeler will hold a topping-off ceremony tomorrow for the 33-story tower on 18th Street between Walnut and Sansom. The building isn't scheduled to open until fall 2009, but developers want to mark the milestone given the economy. Representatives say 84 of the building's 140 units are leased, including the full-floor penthouses.

● **Waldorf-Astoria:** A quartet of developers have begun presales on the project at 15th and Chestnut streets. Tim Mahoney, president of Mariner Commercial, said developers hope to sell at least 50 percent of the building's 128 condo units before breaking ground in January 2010.

Families visiting the University of Pennsylvania or either of the area's hospitals could soon be taking solace in a new extended-stay hotel in University City.

Campus Apartments, a campus-housing developer, and Hersha Hotels plan to start construction on a 10-story Hilton Homewood Suites at 40th and Pine streets early next year. The project got a \$2 million loan last week from the state's Building Pennsylvania program, which invests in development that will create good-paying

construction jobs.

The project still needs approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustments as it seeks to adapt the David Leas Mansion, but has already gotten the thumbs up from the Planning Commission and conceptual approval from the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

"With all the extended stay demand generated by the health system, Penn and [Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania], that's why we're developing this property where we are," said Tom Lussenhop, a partner in Hersha.

The 115-room hotel,

which will feature spacious rooms with kitchens, is pushing ahead despite the economic downturn because it depends on business from the hospitals and universities, which is year-round, Lussenhop noted.

Some neighbors complained the hotel would steal scarce parking from residents, while others feared the owners might turn the building to a rental property if the hotel failed.

Developers said neither of those would happen, pointing to a deal with three parking garages in the area for 75 spaces and a long lease with Hilton.



A new hotel project at the University of Pennsylvania would be for parents and the families of nearby hospital patients.