

# Proposal for high-rise in Canton resurrected

City panel to review plan;  
Dixon considers support

By JILL ROSEN  
SUN STAFF

Plans presumed dead for a Canton waterfront high-rise are very much alive.

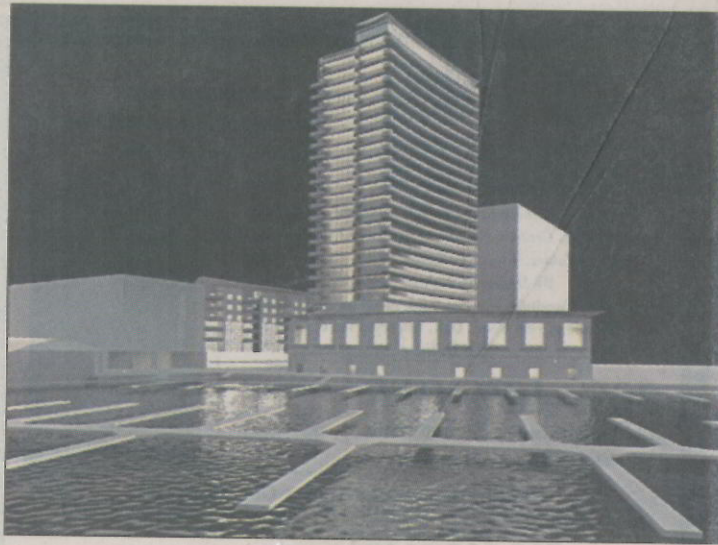
Despite intense community opposition and a vow in August by the councilman representing Canton not to support the project, Baltimore's planning director said this week that people can't kill a perfectly reasonable development just like that.

"That kind of attitude of 'We don't want anything' is not ac-

ceptable," Otis Rolley III said. "I don't think it's necessarily the best idea just to shut stuff down."

Canton residents, who thought they had quashed the plan for a 30-story condominium tower and a 15-story hotel on a Lighthouse Point parking lot, were appalled to learn that the Icon proposal is back — and unchanged. The city's architectural review board will consider the design tomorrow morning.

"We're just in a state of shock. We're very, very, very upset that this is even being considered," said David Keller, a member of the Canton [See Canton, 2B]



A proposal for a 30-story condominium tower and a 15-story hotel goes before the city's architectural review board tomorrow.

# Contested plan for Canton tower is alive, up for city panel's review

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Cove condominium association board. "We believe that 'Just say no' is the proper response."

Officials with Cignal Corp., Icon's developer, insist the project, with distinctive architecture and destination restaurants, is one that people in Southeast Baltimore should embrace.

"We're still committed to an absolute landmark, signature building," said Marco Greenberg, Cignal's vice president. "We're still very convinced that the project will bring excitement and energy to Canton."

Keller and other community leaders are certainly excited and energized — furiously e-mailing and strategizing, trying to figure out how to stop the development.

Their general sentiment is that the Icon's height and density are too much for the neighborhood.

Cignal, a Maryland firm known in Southeast Baltimore for upscale residential projects such as the North Shore pier homes, wants to transform Lighthouse Point, which it bought an interest in this year.

The idea is to fill in the nondescript retail nook, now home to a handful of shops including a bagel place and a Blockbuster video store, with a hotel and high-end stores and restaurants.

Anchoring it all would be a 295-foot condo tower, a sleek glass-and-metal high-rise that would easily dwarf everything on that side of the harbor. A head-turning building that people can't miss is the goal.

Rolley, who advocates using density to revive urban settings, sees little wrong with Cignal's proposal. He's confident that somewhere between the developer's sweeping plan and the community's visceral distrust lies a compromise.

"I'm not fully comfortable with the height and density, but I think we can get there very quickly," he said.

But Cignal needs more than Rolley's support to build the Icon.

To proceed, the firm needs the City Council to approve a major amendment to Light-



house Point's planned unit development. The amendment would allow Cignal to build more on the property than the city had permitted the original developer.

To get the matter before the council, a council member has to introduce a bill. Councilman James B. Kraft appeared to have blocked the project a month ago by refusing to do that.

Kraft said this week that unless the community warmed to the plan, he would not introduce the legislation. However, Council President Sheila Dixon is considering it.

Dixon said yesterday that she has met with the developer and will attend a community association meeting in Canton this month.

"I don't know all the issues, and with all the development going on in that community, I'm sure there are a whole host of issues," she said. "I need to hear both sides and look at what's going to be best for the community and the city."

Though city planners say the Lighthouse Point planned unit development is built out, Greenberg said Cignal believes the company could build something smaller there without a major amendment. But that "something" would probably be shorter and squatter, blocking views to the water in ways that a tall, slender tower would not.

"Do you allow that to happen or do you work out a compro-

mise?" Dixon asked, pointing out that with a shorter building, "The community could be even more upset."

Greenberg said Cignal preferred the taller buildings — it's the design, he said, "that makes the most sense." He said Cignal was willing to listen to community input, "as long as that input is not saying we can't build anything."

The Icon is designed to complement redevelopment efforts Cignal has already begun at Lighthouse Point.

The firm is making drastic changes to the boat hotel there, a four-level structure used for boat storage, apartments and the small shopping area with the Blockbuster and other stores.

The company is replacing the boat storage with 57 condos and parking and dressing up the warehouse-style exterior.

Altogether, Greenberg and city planners say, the Icon and the boat hotel renovations will transform a forgettable plaza into a hot spot.

That's exactly what community leaders fear. Boston Street can't handle the traffic, they say, and the lot can't handle the development.

"The community at large is a little suspicious of a building that tall and that concentrated in that space," said Steven Strohl, president of the Canton Community Association.

Longtime Canton homeowner Marcy Sagel knows she's in the minority, but she said such development would keep the neighborhood thriving.

"I was impressed, and I told them I was impressed," she said. "I thought the architecture was pretty fabulous."

At a hastily called meeting over the weekend at Kraft's office to try to smooth relations between Cignal executives and community leaders, the reception was considerably cooler.

The meeting apparently served mainly to rekindle neighborhood outrage that cooled in the month after people assumed the project was foiled.

"I think," Strohl said, "both sides felt, 'Why don't they get it?'"