

# Convention center work slows



Michael Neibauer, The Examiner  
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## WASHINGTON -

The redevelopment of one of the most valuable urban parcels in the country, D.C.'s Old Convention Center site, has slowed as the designs for a half dozen buildings to be clustered on the site idle in the District's development pipeline.

(Andrew Harnik/Examiner)  
Jennifer Tuttle, left, and Este Griffith ponder potential uses for the site of D.C.'s Old Convention Center.

City leaders still anticipate that the site, currently a giant parking lot in the East End of downtown, will become a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood featuring residential, office and retail space. But Mayor Adrian Fenty's hope of breaking ground within four months

of his inauguration, a goal found in his 100-day plan, was utterly unrealistic, said officials familiar with the undertaking.

The project's master plan, submitted by the development team of Hines/Archstone-Smith, was approved last November. Schematic designs for the buildings were delivered to the D.C. deputy mayor for economic development earlier this year. Financial and legal negotiations are expected to close by October.

"From our minds, we continue to be on the schedule we anticipated for the project," Howard Riker, Hines' vice president, said Thursday.

But a revised timeline shows the project falling slightly behind as schematic design and zoning approvals, neither of which are finished, were to be complete by May. Construction is still expected to start in November 2008 and the first occupants could move in as soon as September 2011 — if all goes according to plan.

"It's on schedule," said Sean Madigan, spokesman for the deputy mayor's office. "Something of this complexity just takes time to germinate."

But at-large D.C. Council Member Kwame Brown, chair of the economic development committee, isn't convinced. Last week, Brown said, he asked the executive for an update, "because it seems to have stalled."

"Everyday it sits we lose money," Brown said. "Every day it becomes more expensive to build."

The process started in 2000 with a task force to determine the best uses for the 10-acre site bounded by New York Avenue NW, Ninth Street, H Street and 11th Street. In November 2003, Hines/Archstone-Smith was selected as the lead developer for what would become a \$650 million project to include 700 condominium and rental units, up to 300,000 square feet of retail, 465,000 square feet of office and 1,600 below-ground parking spaces.

Another 111,000 square feet has been set aside for the District's use.

The “Old Convention Center” name, meanwhile, will soon change as the District conducts a branding exercise to develop a new title.

**Project by the numbers:**

» \$30 million in annual tax revenue

» 7,500 construction jobs

» 5,217 permanent positions

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