

Community Meeting: Proposed Development 4520 Penn Ave. Notes
December 15, 2016
7:00-9:00pm

Welcome and Introductions- Christina Howell

Christina introduced herself as the Executive Director of Bloomfield Development Corporation and the moderator for the evening. Christina also introduced David Breingan Executive Director of Lawrenceville United and Matt Galluzzo Executive Director of Lawrenceville Corporation who are also attending since the development is bordering Lawrenceville and both neighborhoods will be affected by this development. BDC has started to hold these development meetings to make sure that the community has a say on how developments have impact on the community.

Overview of Meeting Ground Rules- Christina Howell

Developer Presentation- Michael Kratsas (developer, KN Penn LLC) and Conor Magee (JMAC Architects)

- Site: 6,688 sq ft lot catty corner to UPMC Children's Hospital near Friendship Ave. and Penn Ave.
- 115 room hotel with patio area in back of building for guests.
- Parking: Basement of building will be parking with enough spaces for if the hotel is at 50-60% occupancy (60 spaces). Entrance for parking will be along Comrie Way. Working with the hospital to buy access to parking spaces.
- First floor: Governor's drive on Penn Ave., potentially a 25,000 sq ft space for a local business. Penn Ave. entrance will have glass wall that will allow people passing to see through the building.
- Shadow: Solar studies show that many of the times shadows are not projected onto residential areas.
- Materials: red/gray/blue bricks, stucco and painted metal panels
- Outreach: Developer has already met with BCC and Children's Hospital with positive support from the hospital.
- Business feasibility: Developer is signing a deal for a hotel franchise and believes that this area is underserved for hotels especially for hospital.
- Has already done work in other Pittsburgh neighborhoods like the Southside.
- Developer will work towards LEED/energy efficient standards and will work to retain some of the storm water which would be an improvement.

Q&A

Questions to the developer Michael Kratsas

Q: What will be in the business space?

A: Space could be a café.

Q: What are the addresses the development will span?

A: 4510 Penn to 4526 Penn Ave.

Q: How long will the construction be?

A: Assuming approvals from the City and a building permit go through without issue we expect to start construction in August and it would last 12 months.

Q: How many parking spaces will there be?

A: 60 spaces.

Q: Have you done a traffic study?

A: We still need to have one done.

Q: Are people parking themselves?

A: Yes, majority will be self park. Potentially offering valet.

Resident said they were concerned about hospital employees that are already parking on local streets. And concerned if hotel guests use hospital parking that more hospital staff will park on residential streets.

Resident who lives on Milgate concerned about guests are taking Milgate parking spots.

Q: Milgate resident is in favor of the hotel, but is looking for a solution for parking on the location.

A: City is not enforcing parking and they would help advocate that there is permitted enforcement

Q: Where are the hotel employees going to park?

A: Employees will have on-site parking and there will be designated parking for staff.

Q: Do you know who the hotel franchise will be? Is it still being determined?

A: A major franchisor is interested in the site, but hasn't signed onto it yet.

Q: What development have you done in Pittsburgh?

A: The developer was involved in the Springhill Suites near PNC Parks and Holiday Inn express in Southside. The developer won an award for the Southside project, and Springhill Suites in Southside. JMAC Architects does national work with the Macy's Hotel, other suburban hotel in Clarion.

Q: What are the variances you are seeking? What does "residential compatibility standards"?

A: Residential compatibility standard variance deals with height requirements and setbacks. Rear setback will be reduced.

Q: Do you know what the City's parking requirement?

A: That is part of the traffic study. Hotel is on par with other developments.

Q: Resident who works in construction said that construction works will park everywhere during construction. Resident ask if the developer had a plan for this issue and if he could reprimand construction workers.

A: Have not made a plan for construction workers parking illegally, but the City can ticket these workers.

Resident is concerned about parking enforcement ending after 7pm.

Developer said that they would be willing to approach City officials to extend parking.

Christina said that residents will work together to determine what to ask in terms of the construction schedule.

Q: Why didn't you buy the corner parcel at Penn Ave. and Friendship Ave.?

A: Children's Hospital is still determining whether or not to buy the parcel. Also the cost for that smaller parcel was similar to the larger lot so it wasn't financially feasible.

Q: Why couldn't parking go further underground or above the building?

A: This would be very expensive and designing the ramps to move cars above or below would take up more spaces than adding a level would.

Q: Is there ballroom/event space?

A: No there isn't.

Q: Have you considered a large parcel on Howley with an old printing building on it to use for parking?

A: Had not, but interested in learning more.

Q: Where will the trailers for construction park?

A: On Penn Ave.

Q: Will the hotel rooms overlook residential backyards?

A: The rooms are configured to face the east and west facing sides of the building that don't overlook the residential part on Comrie. We are thinking about adding a wall to the patio so guests could only look out above houses.

Q: Will there be another meeting when the project has progressed more?

A: Our zoning hearing will be February 9th and we are required to have a traffic study.

Q: Are you seeking support from this group for the variances?

A: Yes

Q: How will you explain to guests how to get to the parking garage in the back?

A: Tell guests to take a left on Penn Ave., left on Friendship Ave., and a left onto Comrie Way.

Q: How will you address safety concerns about cars making a blind turn from Comrie Way?

A: Looking into improving the curb cut on Comrie Way to make it two ways with a left onto Friendship.

Q: Is the governor's drive required? Could the drop off be a pull off?

A: The governor's drive isn't required, but it is an amenity that the hotel franchise and guests prefer. Also, the governor's drive is better for guest safety as they get out of the car and unload luggage.

Q: Where will you accept deliveries?

A: Penn Ave., possibly in the space between the curb cuts for the governor's drive. Near the entrance there will be a room that will hold the dumpster.

Q: How would you feel after a 12 hour shift to not find parking in front of your house?

A: Frustrated.

Q: Is there an over saturation of hotels?

A: We have been looking for many locations for a hotel and we are confident that this location will be in demand because of the lack of hotels in the area and proximity to Children's Hospital.

Q: Are you considering valet parking to alleviate concerns about guests finding the parking garage entrance?

A: We are considering valet parking.

Q: Do you know who will be staying at the hotel? Will there be guests who are transient and cause disruptions and have loud parties?

A: We expect 20% occupancy from guests going related to the hospital and management would not allow crazy parties. Also, there is not large event space in the hotel.

Q: When is the earliest you can break ground?

A: We have a goal for early September 2017.

Q: what colors and materials will you use?

A: Red brick as well as blue and gray bricks and metal panels.

Q: What energy efficient infrastructure will you have?

A: We are seeking LEED standards for the building and have rainwater retention and slow release systems and energy efficient appliances.

Development team leaves the meeting.

Community Conversation

Christina outlined concerns brought up the meeting:

- Construction plan
- Parking on Milgate
- Safe movement of cars and people around the Hotel
- Comrie Way access and adding 2-way traffic
- Height of building on Comrie at 50' on top of a 15' retaining wall on Comrie
- Drop off vs governor's drive, safety of multiple curb cuts
- Traffic study follow up and other meetings to schedule

Following comments and questions from residents.

Comment: Developer should have another meeting after the traffic study is completed.

Comment: There is significant time between the zoning hearing and when the building permit would be issued which BDC could use to have follow up conversations with the developer.

Question: Would the traffic study propose solutions to the issues that the community has brought up.

A: Matt (Lawrenceville Corporation) said that the traffic study will most likely affirm the developer's plans and not provide solutions to issues residents brought up.

Question: Is it possible to see other hotel vacancy rates in the area?

A: Matt said that the institutions lending the money to the developer will determine if this hotel is viable for the market.

Comment: Concerned about the viability of café attached to hotel. Look at Main Street, there are many examples of businesses that come and go.

Comment: There are other options for families staying the area like Ronald McDonald House and Family House.

Christina said that the viability of the business is something that the developer and its lenders will determine.

Question: What are the variances the developer is looking for?

Answer: Christina said that variances for general hotel use, increase in Floor Area Ratio restriction, increase in height restriction, and residential compatibility standards. Matt said that neighborhood requests do not need to correspond with each variance and a community can create a letter of approval conditional on requests from the community. Matt added that the big variance is on height. Dave (Lawrenceville Corporation) says “special exemptions” are less definitive than variances.

Comment: Concern about not enough space in Comrie Way to widen street for two ways as developer proposes.

Comment: Matt suggests traffic study to view alternatives based on using valet, governor’s drive, and two way on Comrie.

Question: What benefits can the community get from this development. Could there be a community benefits agreement?

Answer: Matt said in Lawrenceville, they have been able to have developers agree to looking at staffing through Lawrenceville Works initiatives through Goodwill. Community Benefit Agreements are usually for large projects like 28 acre projects. There is an opportunity for funding or sponsoring events. Christina said that BDC would not be comfortable having a developer financially support the organization for a letter of approval as that would be a conflict of interest.

Christina said that she would work on:

- Potential second meeting to discuss traffic study, construction plans, and projections of occupancy since those are not fully formed.
- Design alternatives for Penn Ave. access to hotel
- Matt suggested requesting an elevation of what the project will look like from Comrie because the massing right up against comrie is going to 5 stories plus a tall retaining wall.

Comment: Could there be a location that allows a better screen projection? Answer was that that would definitely happen.

Conclusion-

Christina said that BDC will distribute notes and presentation from this meeting by Wednesday December 21st and will publish on Nextdoor/Facebook/Website and email to everyone that signed in for the meeting.