

Community Meeting on 5515 Butler Street – CRAFT Development

Meeting Minutes

1/24/2017, 6 PM @ Lawrenceville AOH

38 people in attendance.

Introduction: Dave Breingan from Lawrenceville United and Matt Galluzzo from Lawrenceville Corporation welcomed everyone and explained the community process and the ground rules. Everyone agreed to the ground rules. Dave and Matt introduced the team working with CRAFT Development on the project:

Larry Regan – CRAFT Development
Mitch Griffis – CRAFT Development
Ryan Indovina – architect
Robert Indovina – architect
Luna Fruensgaard – architect
Doug Pindilli – Continuum Construction

Presentation by development team: Large parcel between 55th and 56th across from Shop N Save going back to Harrison Street. “Gateway to Upper Lawrenceville.” Trying to create a development that pulls Lawrenceville further down. Harrison is currently a paper street that is overgrown with trees and such. Brick wall all along Butler Street that is the remnant of a factory structure. Used to be zinc plant. When we took a first stab on this site, the major hurdle was that Berlin Way dead-ends at our property but all of the site utilities exist along where it would extend, which necessitates extending Berlin Way into the site. Wanted to relate to Lawrenceville while also creating its own distinct flavor. Looked at Western Europe model of “mews” development: instead of facing homes towards streets/alleys, looked at turning the standard row housing so that it’s perpendicular to Butler Street. Mews areas with green spaces between rows of townhomes and a centralized access driveway to on-suite garages (2 parking spaces per unit). Units face neighbors across mews / nice green spaces. Berlin Way would be the access way for vehicles and then would proceed into driveway to units. 55th and 56th both signalized so didn’t want to have any access off Butler Street.

Optional loft space on top floors. Instead of cookie cutters, want to articulate some variation between units through windows, materiality, options to buyers. Rear decks. View on Butler Street: pull the front yards off Butler Street. Some units would be setback and others would be directly on Butler Street. Trying to make the alleyway equal in importance to Butler Street, instead of traditional alleyway where is less prominent.

Smallest unit would be 3 BR, 3.5 bath. Larger unit would be 1,600-2,100 sf. 2 car garage. Fourth floor option for larger units.

Harrison Street is an asphalt street owned by city but not maintained by the city. Talking to LC and LU about strategies to integrate some park elements into it to return it back into a useful space for the neighborhood as well as the development.

Practical items: visitor parking along Berlin Way (approximately 8 spaces). Reintroducing sidewalks on 56th and 55th. Trying to make it a self-sufficient development while also being part of the community.

Questions and Comments

Jim Nied: Parking is a problem throughout Lawrenceville. I see there's room for 2 parking spots for each unit, but is there room for space in front of the garages?

- We have 24' between the homes, which is basically a street width. From a practical standpoint, we wouldn't want people parking in the driveways outside the garage because it would block other residents.

Jim Nied: how many units?

- 68 units.

Jim Nied: That doesn't seem like it's sufficient, because it's not a lot of room for visitors. Has any additional thought been given to use Harrison for additional parking?

- We don't own Harrison, so that would be up to the city. Our solution has been to look at continuing a bike trail and green space, per community plans and conversations with LC.

Tim LaVoie: If you're going to do about 70 units, would it affect your bottom line to include options for affordable housing so that everyday neighborhood people could afford these homes?

- There's a lot of factors to consider. It's a brownfield conversion. There's construction costs we have to think about. It's not dead, but how you quantify affordable housing is a pretty generic question.

Lauren Connelly: All of the units are for-sale and what's the cost?

- All for sale. High 300s and low 400s is where we're at right now, but it's still a little conceptual. These are not luxury or modern. Trying to gear towards everyone in Lawrenceville, not one segment.

Scott Canary: Under the HAO, will they be available to be rented or is it strictly owner occupied?

- We don't imagine these to be used for rentals, but I don't think we would restrict owners from using it however they want.

Molly Vincent: Are there any variances that you'll be going through with the city?

- We know there will be variances but we haven't done a detailed analysis yet.

Taro Matsuno: To get the zoning change to what you're looking at, how many units are you permitted?

- There is not a unit max in an LNC.

Eddie Mattock: Construction phase: Butler Street is quite busy. What would the staging area look like?

- Ideally it would be on Harrison Street. Berlin Way is the center of the project so we'll work off of that.

Mary Turak: How wide will Berlin Way be?

- It will be a full size street. 24' from sidewalk to sidewalk. Currently we're showing a varied depth of sidewalk. At some places it will be 8' but others it will be 15'.

Mary Turak: As far as Harrison Street goes, why wouldn't you continue it as a street? It goes all the way down.

- It would be delightful but the word we've gotten from the city is that they're not maintaining it. They won't vacate it but they also won't take care of it. There's an existing sidewalk there, poles, and utility lines.

Jesse Perkins: Aside from smaller units, would you give any concern to maybe reducing units and providing more parking on Berlin Way?

- We could certainly look at it. We've tried to make the units as thin as possible while still accommodating 2 cars. We always want to maximize our parking relative to the units. From our standpoint it's above standard for the typical single family unit, where the standard is 1 car per unit. Logistically, perhaps there could be single sided parking along Berlin Way since it will be 24' wide.

Linda Bingham: I'm with Howard Hanna on the project. Getting metered parking on Harrison Street would provide additional parking for guests while also creating revenue for the city?

- The road is 500' long so it's something we could look at.

Cat Sheane: Do you have any plans to combine environmental sustainability into the design/construction of your project?

- We try to use sustainable practices where possible, but we won't be going for LEED accreditation. Reasonably with this being a brownfield site, there are challenges. For the units themselves, we try to maximize our performance. The way that we've set up the site plan, we always try to look at how can this be sustainable: it's fairly dense; the units are offset so that you get more daylight in from the corners; just the fact that it's townhouses because there's less heat loss. So there are a lot of factors that we look at sustainability through besides just materiality. Also architectural detailing: making this a project that will be here many many years ahead as opposed to something that will become outdated or people will get tired of.

Cat Sheane: With all the building happening in LV, I'm just surprised that there's this much need for more townhomes.

- The problem is that they're all rentals and condos. There are no townhomes. We're so flooded with condos, there's no single family living. This development has the benefits of ownership and the benefits of townhouse living.

Maryanne Bacharat: Lived in LV most of my life and worked for Howard Hanna – I think it's a wonderful thing in that it's townhomes, more affordable than a lot of other projects that are coming in. Better than more apartments that we don't need.

Emily Schmidlapp: What there's a larger shortage of is affordable housing. This is 4 times the price that I paid for my home in Lawrenceville. I think it would really engender good will with the community to consider affordable housing for this project.

Alex Illes: Also concerned about affordability. It would be great even if a couple units were in the 100K level instead of the 400K, so that young couples could still come into the neighborhood. Me and my husband both have master's degrees and we can't afford a home for \$400,000. How will this affect bus usage and public transportation?

- We're intending to provide as much bike parking as possible within the units and outside. Bike parking for visitors as well. As far as public transportation, it's hard to say what that impact will be, but we could definitely look into that and are open to suggestions.

Ted Zellers: I've heard about successful programs in other cities where new residents are not only given info about public transit schedules but also given a 1 month bus pass, which gets them to use it enough to become comfortable with it so that they continue to use it. Would you be open to that?

- Yes.

Jane Hallinan: What aspects of the project do you see as components that could be value-engineered?

- I certainly understand the value engineer idea. There's lots of underlying cost associated with the ground that it's on. From our standpoint, we're not keen on using low-quality materials that will deteriorate quickly. We want to get it done well and done right and that's our focus.

Phoebe Stern: 6 units of affordable housing would be a huge difference to the neighborhood.

- What do you mean by affordable housing?
- Phoebe: People at or below Lawrenceville's median income can't afford to buy homes here and they're being priced out and displaced. It's not \$400,000 – it's closer to \$150,000-200,000.
- Matt Galluzzo (LC): Affordability is not spending more than 30% of your income on your housing. We're talking about 80%-115% of area median income for Allegheny County. That's the basement for affordability.

Patti Wachman: Who are you marketing to, who is going to buy these? Is it families, older couples who are retiring?

- I think we're trying not to peg ourselves. We're trying to attract professionals, young families, older families who might still want rooms for their children. We're trying to keep all of them consistent to Lawrenceville design standards, while still creating a mix of units that aren't tailored to one specific group so that there are many tiers. There's relocation potential because of all the growth to the city. Affordable homes are difficult in the market but we're trying to introduce tiers – options to add or remove to give people options on cost. The upgrades widen the market for buyers.

Lauren Connelly: The 56th and Butler intersection, you said you're adding sidewalks? Are there concerns with how people will be pulling out on Butler with the parking at Hop Farm.

- We're required to have sidewalks on our side.

Lauren Connelly: Does the city mandate that you have any outside traffic analysis?

- We're having conversations with the city and determining if it's required and to what extent. That sidewalk needs to wrap around because it's currently a disaster.

Nick Sarandou: On the affordable housing piece, who would subsidize the gap?

- We were talking to the URA today about different programs, but now the budgets have been cut significantly so there aren't a lot of funds we can tap. Subsidizing it only picks winners for the first round because eventually it's going to return to market.

Cat Sheane: Is the site big enough to warrant a storm water management plan?

- The goal of our mews design was to maximize green space. We have a yard in front of every unit as well as public, permeable space in front of units along Berlin Way. We're working with the city to figure out the requirements for the site.

Janelle Donaldson: I think you need to look closer at what you're doing on 56th Street. With Hop Farm, people park on either side of the street, which they're not supposed to. If you put sidewalk there, no cars will be able to park over there?

- I agree. We need to clean up that space. The old steel mill entrance door is still sitting there. We've already been in touch with those businesses over there to get the conversation started. Another issue is that the whole part of Harrison Street is below grade, which creates flooding issues for people around there. Progressively we've been trying to work with PWSA and others to get it fixed up. The shuttle system that happens in the back, they deserve to have clear access too.

Jody Noble: Could you tell us about CRAFT and other projects you've done?

- We're a Toronto developer. We've done several residential developments with other partners – not on our website. The majority of our development is commercial. Florida and Pittsburgh are the only 2 markets we've taken on in the US. Most of the development we've done is in Toronto.

Jody Noble: What attracted to you to Pittsburgh?

- It's like a little Toronto. Lawrenceville is just like our Queen West. Industrial heritage of Toronto. We've worked with Doug and his father in Florida and he introduced us to this market and we've been working through them. We always have a local contact and a local partner when we go to outside markets. We hire local people – we take what we know from Toronto, learn from the locals, and try to find something that works for everyone.

Alex: What's your dream timeline?

- Dream is to start construction next week, but we have to follow a process with the city. Would like to be breaking ground in the fall if at all possible.

Eddie: Regarding the parking, it's an issue for all parties involved. Could you look into leasing spaces from UPMC's lot behind you or negotiating a deal for overflow?

- It's an idea. In my experience, it always looks very full, but we could explore. They currently close the lot regimentally at 11 PM because of safety concerns. Once we get Harrison cleaned up, could provide some more opportunities since it will be better lit.

Jonathan Visser: Thank you for being here. I'm excited to hear you hire local. Any jobs created once construction is completed?

- There's no retail within the development, but there will be maintenance of common areas that needs to happen, which will create some local jobs.

Matt Galluzzo: Phasing?

- We'll have to create all the infrastructure and the buildings will come out of the ground in phases based on interest. Looking at 20 units for the first phase roughly.

Ted Zellers: Could you estimate how much less cost there'd be if the units didn't have integral parking?

- In Toronto, each spot is about \$50,000 in market value. That's in terms of market value. In terms of construction cost, the way the design is, you're spending less on the parking because it's on the first floor and the home is on top so it's just concrete. But I'm not sure that people will want units without parking.

Jonathan Visser: Driving on Butler is a nightmare. With the Scott Electric project, it's going to get worse. Is there any way to aid traffic on Butler?

- I can't do anything about traffic on Butler. Our goal has been to take traffic off Butler. Short of a home-run transit system that will encourage people to stop driving, I don't know what we can do. It's the same in Toronto. The traffic is pretty high-paced and the general sense of a safe pedestrian passage and a varied experience will help traffic from a safety standpoint.

Phoebe Stern: I'm pleased to hear you've talked to the URA. It's hard to get developers to consider this. I just want to say there are legal options: a separate co-op has been done in other cities. Please don't give up on affordable options. If you want to pursue it, you will have support. People are attracted to this neighborhood because it's not just a blanket gentrifying neighborhood.

Jesse Perkins: You mentioned the phases. Depending on the market, would you consider downsizing beds and baths in order to provide more affordable units?

- Unless we misread the market, we wouldn't be downsizing or redrawing our units. Other than market conditions, I can't see any reason why we would do it.

Next steps: Council hearing on February 28th to move from UI to LNC designation. ZBA will be after that but not on the calendar yet until further along in the design review process. If there are any other questions or comments, please reach out to Lawrenceville United at (412) 802-7220 or info@LUnited.org.