

9th Ward Block Watch Meeting Notes

November 15, 2016

6:32 meeting called to order

Public Safety Report

Officer Davis - No fatal overdoses over the past month. Summarized monthly crime report. Recent reports of theft from autos with no evidence of forced entry. Briefed the group on 2-1-1.

Questions – Can we get a copy of the crime report? – LU will upload to website as part of meeting notes, Dave also offered to mail copies to individuals.

How many cameras on Butler Street work? If they aren't working, why aren't they? Can we get them turned on? We know which ones aren't working, but that isn't information that LU would like to share publicly.

Dave explained the community meeting on 12/6 to address the local/regional heroin epidemic. Police and service providers will be on hand to discuss the problem and strategies to address it. This meeting will be at the Persad Center from 6-8 PM.

Community Meeting on Crowhill Development's proposed restaurant at 4412 Butler Street

Dave explained community process and ground rules. Concerns were brought up that community groups are not doing enough to stop bars and new development, and that the decision has already been made. Also stated that people have come to complain, not to listen. Dave explained that the community process is only for zoning variances that appear before the Zoning Board of Adjustments and liquor licenses, because there are public processes built into these systems that provide opportunities for residents and community groups to get involved. Community groups can't intervene in private transactions that don't come through those mechanisms.

Dave then introduced the Crowhill Development team and they gave their presentation.

Restaurant is planned to be run by restaurateur out of Brooklyn. Plan on a full service, Italian restaurant. Focus is on fresh pasta, fresh sandwiches, typical hours are 11-11. The lease has yet to be signed, but if it does this will be the first restaurant outside of NYC.

Q: Where will people park?

- Option to park at the park when it is not in use. Want to encourage patrons to use public transportation.

Q: That parking lot is shared by the Boys and Girls Club and 9th Ward Youth Association. Many leagues and games occur at Leslie Park through 9th Ward Youth Association and they need the parking. It would be dangerous to have people pulling in there who don't know to expect kids. We will block anyone parking in it.

- If this is not public parking we have been misinformed and sincerely apologize. We spoke with Deb Gross and Mike Hepler who told us that the parking lot is public property. If we are told that we can't use it, then we will not use it.

Q: Thanks for coming, appreciate that you will be using local food and products. How many employees will you have? And what is the price range?

- We will have around 40 staff and about 15 people working at any one time. The maximum capacity is 110. Price range of food is probably between \$10 and \$20 for all food. Nothing above \$20.

Concerns about parking were brought up.

- Zoning required 9 spaces, the zoning administrator provided an administrator exception to allow for 6 spaces.

Comment: We have to change permit parking hours as a neighborhood.

Comment: Why isn't the city building tiered parking? There needs to be more parking structures in the neighborhood.

Q: Timeline?

- Planning on an April opening.

Regent Penn Development – Zack and Bill

Zack has lived in Lawrenceville and understands the parking situation. Wants to make it clear up front that the project includes parking in compliance with zoning.

Zack noted that he has done over 15 restorations in the neighborhood. Take vacant and eyesore properties, gut them, and then rebuild them. We've never torn down a house. Have done several rowhouse homes in the neighborhood then sell them to owner-occupied residents. No rentals.

Currently used as a yard. The owner was planning on putting homes there. We're planning on 5 attached single-family townhomes. Homes are roughly 2,000 sq ft each. Have front integral garages. Houses will face Davison Street.

Most people moving to the neighborhood only have 1 car. Last 3 homes were this way for homes that we sold.

Variations we're seeking are front and side setbacks. 15' required, providing 11' with grass and trees (no fence). All brick along facades and sides. No vinyl siding.

Also seeking variance for minimum lot size. 1,800 sf required. Each house is 16' x 45'.

Accessory rooftop deck setbacks for front and side. 3 story with a mezzanine box on the roof and deck. As zoning sees it, rooftop decks and mezzanine room are not considered a 4th story. Will be ample fire suppression for the project.

Also a variance for HVAC units on roof.

Working to build homes that are contextual. Don't want "spaceships" – want to maintain style and architecture of the neighborhood: synthetic slate and mansard roof above two stories of brick.

Interior space: main living floor is 2nd floor (kitchen, etc.) so we can fit garages into the 1st floor.

Sale price: mid-500's. 100K below market. My position in this neighborhood has not been to make money and leave. I've broke even on more projects than I care to admit. Goal is to go to good owner-occupied tenant who will be respectful and good neighbors.

Q&A

Q: Stormwater?

- Under the size for a storm water management plan needed. Piping it under ground. City, PWSA, Fire Dept all have to approve.

Follow up: I'm a plumber and I know they've had issues with sewers along that line beforehand.

- PWSA will make us amend our plan accordingly if it's an issue. Our site is bounded by the sewer system so there's a lot of capacity there. PWSA will verify.

Q: With other projects affecting Carlton Street, what does this do to people who own homes on Carlton? People on the roofs of these new properties will cause issues for folks below.

- We're below grade on Carlton Street. Other than contextuality, one of the reasons why we wanted to pull the homes closer to Davison is so that we have less disturbance on the other side. Adding density is difficult for a neighborhood, but we're not going to start this project unless it's right. Not going to let a hole in the ground stay there for 2 years like the other project.

Q: Do you need a retaining wall there?

- Yes, we have an engineer. Houses will be 15' from retaining wall and 25' from houses on the back.

Q: You would be putting houses in a few blocks from about 30 empty construction houses at the Bancroft Street project. Are you concerned about the demand?

- Those are all rental projects. These will be owner-occupied.
- Ed from LC: The Bancroft project avoided our community process by creating a project that was by-right in the zoning code. Developers can do this, and it's a credit to Regent Penn that they want to work with the community voluntarily.

Q: I live opposite lot. Owned since 1890s. Across the street they demolished houses and wanted to cram 4 lots. Why would they want to jam so many in a small area? Issues with demolishing that created problems. 5 houses seem jammed. Any effort to reduce number of units?

- This is what we're proposing to zoning with 5 proposed houses. I understand how it looks like it can't handle that amount, but many of our houses in Lawrenceville are often 10' or 12' wide.

Q: Will this look like Lawrenceville or those houses that you see on Penn Avenue?

- They're all brick and I've gotten all my inspiration from this neighborhood and the restoration that we've done.

Q: How safe is this if there's a fire?

- There will be sprinkler systems in every home so they'll be safer than 99% of homes in Pittsburgh.

Q: What about if there's a fire to a nearby property on Carlton?

- Still would be access for firefighters.

Q: Davison is really narrow between Arsenal and the garages, from 46th up to new homes. Have people flying down Davison and there's only room for 1 car. You can't widen it, so what plans do you have to address that?

- Yes, it's a narrow street but we will not be adding any cars to the street. It's off-street parking.

Q: Will all the homes look exactly the same?

- Going to probably "mirror" them so they don't look like carbon copies, like you see on Home Street and others.

Q: Will your people be eligible for permit parking?

- Ed from Lawrenceville Corporation: Given that this would be homeownership, there aren't any restrictions to prevent them from getting permit parking as well, to my knowledge.

Q: This will take away 3-4 spaces and people could then go get permit parking, so you're potentially taking 8 spots off the street.

- That's correct, but we're following what is required in the zoning code.

Q: Are the variances for economic reasons?

- No. We want to build contextual homes. All of your homes in Lawrenceville that were built years ago would be illegal by zoning code today. In trying to keep context with the neighborhood, we're spending more money on brick and slate – we could use a lot less aesthetically pleasing materials that wouldn't be as contextual.

Q: Do you own the property now or is it contingent on zoning?

- We do not own it yet. If zoning doesn't go through, we will not buy it.

Q: Is the current owner going to build 4 or 5 units if you don't?

- He's going to sell it to someone else who would be doing similar scale, so yes.

Q: When you purchase this property, you're getting the house and the lot?

- No, not the house. The deck comes onto the property.

Q: When is zoning hearing?

- December 1st at 9:20 AM.

Q: Building looks great. Did you take this proposal from previous owner?

- No we didn't take their project, this is ours.

Q: What's the listing price of the property?

- Wasn't listed on market.

Q: What about people coming to visit?

- They are meeting the zoning code on parking.

Q: How do we change the zoning code?

- Must be done through City Planning.

Comment: I work for the city – these will have ample parking for these units. The issue is not these units but the restaurants on Butler Street that aren't providing enough parking for their projects.