

9th Ward Block Watch

8.16.16

4412 Butler Meeting – initial introduction

Presentation

By Fabian Friedland, Crow Hill Development

Company Background: Crow Hill is based in Brooklyn, but they have a local partner in Pittsburgh. Part of the urbanist movement, they appreciate neighborhoods and historic buildings.

Crow Hill is now 14 months into this project, but there has been no requirement as of yet for a public process, which is why they hadn't attended a community meeting before now.

Building History: 4412 Butler was built in 1912 by Robert Trimble as a YMCA. In 1928 it was converted to a Boys Club. In 1933 the extension was built, with a grassy area in front.

Structure: 3 story brick building with a limestone basement.

Historic Preservation: Developers would like to restore original-style windows and the top of the building - formerly balustrade.

Building Use and Construction Information

- They are planning to retain the extension for use as 5 parking spaces and use the grassy area as outdoor space for the restaurant.
- Residents will enter on 45th Street, and the restaurant entrance will be along Butler.
- 13 residential apartments currently proposed. Fabian noted that many other developers have considered the project and not gone forward on it, so this is likely the most modest possibility for residential use.
- Ground floor restaurant proposed – unnamed Italian restaurant from Brooklyn to be attending October meeting to share more details of restaurant. Restauranters wanted to use the front of the building, not the gym, as it integrates better with the street. Plan to have a coffee shop within the restaurant.
- As they were doing demolition on the interior, they discovered some riveted steel beams which they plan to expose.
- Former gym space is currently mothballed as any use of it would require a parking variance, which they do not expect the community to support. They are considering community-benefitting use, e.g. gym or meeting space.

Parking

Apartments: with 30% bicycle reduction, the zoning department required they provide 9 spaces. Administrative exception granted to reduce to 6 spaces: 5 interior, 1 exterior handicapped space. They are marketing the apartments to people who walk to work.

Restaurant: Boys Club/Charter School had used Leslie Park Parking lot for staff; restaurant would like to use it for staff parking when it's not being used by Boys and Girls Club staff. Restaurant space is under 2500 sqft and as such doesn't require its own parking allowance.

Q&A

Q: As a resident of 4406 Butler, I live right next door to this building. How will it affect me?

A: As it is an existing building, impact should be relatively low for construction. Residential apartments also tend to be fairly low-impact compared to alternate uses.

Q: How is the project being financed?

A: The project is already completely financed privately, with total project costs just below \$4m. Started construction already; even though it's not an extremely profitable project, Crow Hill wanted to jump into Pittsburgh projects with historic building of small scale. No government financing for this project.

Q: Timing of construction? Nextdoor complaints have been shared.

A: Demolition has been going on for 5 weeks, at one point a contractor started at 5:30am - it will not happen again. Crow Hill was displeased with contractor and will intervene if there are ever other construction issues.

Q: Annex in the alleyway: are you tearing it down?

A: No, just opening the back of the building for parking use.

Q: Gymnasium - why not make it parking?

A: We considered that, but a gym is more likely now. Parking use is logistically very difficult, would have to tear it down and they'd prefer restoring it in some capacity.

Q: Dust and debris is a major problem during construction. What can you do to mitigate that?

A: Yes – though some is inevitable, they are working to get through the project as quickly and cleanly as possible.

Q: No matter what, 13 new apartments will increase the number of cars on the street.

A: We will actively encourage people without cars to move in. Hoping to have CHP employees or others who work locally and are car-free.

Q: Cessna Way - is it wide enough for cars to get in and out without hitting anything? Lots of traffic problems at that intersection already - will you work with the City to mitigate those issues?

A: City's Traffic Engineer reviewed the plans and considered the space workable.

Q: This will be taking away on-street parking spaces.

A: The city never considered them legitimate spaces. Is it legal to park on one side of the alley? Crow Hill's understanding is that it is not.

Q: What will rents be?

A: \$1300 for 1bedroom, \$1600 for 2 bedroom, \$650 for 1 bedroom

Q: Unit breakdown?

A: 7 1bedrooms, 6 2bedrooms.

Q: Will this affect garbage pickup due to increased use of Cessna Way?

A: If anything, it will increase the space available for garbage trucks as cars currently park illegally in Cessna Way. Also, all pickup and deliveries will be done off-street.

Q: Restaurant capacity?

A: Likely 60 seats in dining room, but not totally certain yet. Will follow up at next month's meeting.

Q: So there will be some parking available for residents, but none available for restaurant patrons or staff?

A: Restaurant plans to direct people to under-utilized lot by BGC; ride share is changing how people use cars. Public transportation is strong along Butler.

Q: Would you be open to creating agreements with daytime businesses that have parking?

A: Iready talking with businesses that only use their lots during the day, but no specific agreement created yet.

Q: Timeline for construction and opening?

A: April 1 completion.

Q: Will there be RPP restrictions on residents?

A: We're open to it, if there's a strong feeling from the community, they'll consider it.

Matt, LC: This project thus far hasn't required any public process, so they decided to come out of their own accord – thanks to Crow Hill. They should also be commended for including an affordable unit. We ask that of all new developments and many do not consider it. We still need to discuss the use of the Leslie Park parking lot for private use. We do have a masterplan for Leslie to reconfigure use, and typically don't encourage any business use of private parking on a public lot. We should be holding a neighborhood-level discussion on this in the future.

Dave, LU: Reach out to LU if you have concerns/questions.

Additional Questions

Q: Has there been discussion of a traffic grid below Butler Street and better configuring traffic flow generally?

A: Long-term conversation on this issue - we are currently focused on 40th/Foster/Willow - considering how to alleviate the traffic issues at this critical intersection. LC and LU continue to appeal to city and county to deal with this issue.

Q: Extending Foster through Terminal Development project - still a priority?

A: We encourage as much connectivity as possible, but ultimately the City has to determine that. Willow connection would be a much better fit for this, assuming the County agrees to relocate their storage facility.

Q: Is a parking garage still part of the plan for the 40th and Butler site?

A: Milhaus agreed that they will leave part of their site dormant till June 2017 so City, URA, and Parking Authority could consider the feasibility of a lot on this site.

Q: Is Milhaus' project still going forward in general?

A: State's Historic Review Commission is working with them now on some site issues, but presumably.

Announcement

Next meeting will be September 20, 7PM, on 4501 Butler (auto lot). Presentation from group looking to add a barbecue restaurant and macaroni bar.