

## Community Meeting Notes on 5308, 5310, 5312, and 5314 Duncan Street

### 10<sup>th</sup> Ward Block Watch- 3/14/2017 Lawrenceville AOH

#### Presentation by Dave Gould, General Contractor, Chiseled Homes; Tusick & Associates, Architect

We are proposing the building of 4 single family homes. Homes will each tandem garages that will fit 2 cars deep with additional room for one car in front of the building, which will leave the sidewalk clear. Each home will have a rooftop deck- designed to have options- which can change the layout from 2BR to 4BR with optional rooftop BR. Green space will be in the back of each lot, with tiered garden plots. Poe Way sits behind these lots and is very narrow at the back. Developer is seeking two variances:

1. Height Variance- with the optional roof BR, the max height would be 45 feet, 5 feet above zoning limit. Developer understands that this is a community concern.
2. Setback variance- Want to go up to the lot width; retaining walls built to keep steps on either side.

Each home will start at 2,200 sq. feet, with the option to extend to 3,000 should the buyer opt for the rooftop deck. Homes will begin a \$499,000.

#### Q&A

Leslie Woods- for the folks in the homes above these homes, will it cutoff their views?

Wayne Grgurich- I've been there for 25 years, one of the main reasons we moved there was for the view.

- A: Architect did a study and the field of view would not change much. We also met with Ed Nusser who suggested we take a drone to look at it.

Doug Cruze: What is allowable under zoning?

- A: Allowable is 40 feet and we are going for 45 feet. There are other buildings around there that are as high.
- Wayne: The home that you're showing the view from is the highest on the street. It wouldn't take anything but 4 or 10 feet to obliterate our view. We really value the view and when we argued in front of the ZBA for a similar project, that project obviously fell through. Those 5 or 10 feet really concern us.
- Wayne: The beautiful thing about the Community Land Trust is that the homes fit in with the neighborhood in terms of context and height. I'm worried this is going to change the tenor and the look of the neighborhood. This doesn't fit in with the neighborhood.
- Lisa George: We are also concerned about the rooftop deck and the impact on the privacy of adjacent residents.
- Wayne Grgurich: There's ample parking on that block so you don't need the integral garages.

Dave Brenigan: What do you need the variance?

- A: We want to have it as an option for someone who would want a rooftop deck/BR. We might not end up going that high if that's what the buyers decides, but we thought while we're doing this we wanted to get everything out of the way now.

Leslie Woods: Are you willing to work with these people? We're all for revitalizing those properties and progress, but we're just concerned about the view?

- A: I'm willing to work with them. In regards to the privacy issue, there's not as high of an expectation of privacy in a neighborhood like this.
  - Wayne Grgurich: That's not our biggest concern, it's the views.
  - A: Old and new is the way that things are going right now. I think it looks very good. It is also more economical to build houses like this.

Wayne Grgurich: We are also concerned that something is going to get started and not finished like other area projects:

- A: Absolutely. We all lose money when a project doesn't finish. We're not the homeowners that are fixing up our own homes. There's a lot of money that goes into this.

Kyle Webster: How did you develop the price point for these? This would be one of the most expensive homes to sell in the neighborhood and that concerns me.

- A: The realtor developed the price. They're the ones that came up with the price.
- Kyle: Would you be open to negotiations?
- A: In what way?
- Kyle: the cost of housing in Upper Lawrenceville has skyrocketed and has priced out a lot of neighbors. I moved here based on who lived here, not who would live here in the future. Rents are going up and taxes are going up, which forces people out, and that really concerns me in terms of its impact on me and also on my neighbors.
- A: Part of what the price came to is because trends we see in the area, houses are being built around us, and around the square footage that we're going to build. This specific development, because of the way the site is, will take a lot more in construction to get ready; more so than other projects in the neighborhood. So those are the factors that come into play with pricing. Also, the houses that are currently there are in poor condition and vacant. From the sidewalk it's 50' in, 10-15' of retaining walls then goes back to the back of the lot. The way it exists now, these need to be taken care of. We looked into rehabbing the homes at first, but it's not feasible because of the condition of the homes. The options are very limited.

Matt Galluzzo: How many pre-sales before moving forward?

- A: Zero.

Emily Schmidlapp: What I recently learned is that a lot of tax payer money goes into subsidizing high-end projects like this one. How are you funded?

- A: Private investors, our personal money, and banks. We don't take grants from public sources or tax payers. The only thing that holds us back is zoning approval.
- Emily Schmidlapp: What about tax abatements?
- A: Anytime you build new, there's two-year tax abatement. I don't know if there are other programs.

- Matt Galluzzo: Will you have your building permits by June?
- A: that depends on zoning.
- Matt Galluzzo: For Upper Lawrenceville, there's a program called Act 42 Enhanced, which is a tax abatement program. That program expires in June so that hinges on their timing.

Leslie Woods: How long will this project take?

- A: 9-12 months. You're going to see some trucks coming in and out. I'm going to see if I can put the dumpster on Poe Way where it's out of the way.

Leslie Woods: What other projects have you done that we can look at?

- A: We are starting a demo on the 5200 block of Carnegie St. We've done projects in Greensburg, Irwin, Bethel Park, and Squirrel Hill.
- Matt Galluzzo: New construction as well as rehab?
- This will be our first new construction project.
- Matt: Stick built or modular?
- A: Stick built.

Kim Autore: Price points- where do you get these from in a neighborhood that's still having issues with drug deals and overdoses, as we have heard in the public safety report?

- A: The realtor did this. There are other projects that are even higher than us in Upper Lawrenceville.

Kim Faught: Who decides how the land is used?

- Matt Galluzzo: Zoning and private property rights. They just have to stay within the zoning code. In this part of the neighborhood its residential, high density, single family homes. The riverfront is zoned as Urban Industrial or General Industrial. That's how it's determined; in this project, 40' is what's capped under zoning and they're going for 45', so that's the variance for height.
- Kim: How do we influence this?
- Matt: That's the whole purpose of this community meeting. You can also attend the ZBA hearing yourself and support/oppose/observe.
- Kim: I have two friends from 57<sup>th</sup> who were moved out from rising prices and popped over to Sharpsburg. Where does this group have the clout to address housing affordability?
- Matt Galluzzo: Upper Lawrenceville Plan addressed these very issues: how do we deal with affordability and manage displacement in the neighborhood? From those meetings we received a mandate to pursue a "housing for all" strategy. Lawrenceville Corporation is working on Community Land Trust where we're selling homes to people below 80% AMI. Also doing rental projects at the Doughboy Square.
- David Gould: I have another company called Tiny Homes Pittsburgh, which are affordable homes. I don't want you think we're these big, heavy, bad builders. We're also looking at building tiny houses in Garfield. First one is going in Whitehall. We may very well be a part of the affordable housing efforts in Lawrenceville.

**Zoning Hearing is Thursday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am**

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## Community Meeting on 5654 Butler St. (Hunter Saw Building)

### Presentation by Liza Cruze with Cruze Architects:

We are both architects and builders. We bought the building four years ago and have slowly been making improvements as time and money allows. It's a pretty wonderful building, built at the end of the 1800s as the Hunter Saw Factory. They built blades for steel factories. Building kept growing over time. There's a courtyard behind the building where part of the building collapsed. Shed structure is open air. Front space is what got us suckered into getting involved, this building has a beautiful timber frame. We've actually already gone through the ZBA process a couple years ago. We're approved to go for multiunit residential, but after we had thought it through more, we decided this isn't the best use. To us, this should be a public space that more people can see and use. What we're thinking now is the 1<sup>st</sup> floor becomes our office, a small gallery, and our workshop. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and mezzanine level become event space and flex space, not for raves and rock concerts; we're talking about charity events, bridal showers, wedding receptions, and corporate retreats. We want to pair with caterers and event planners. Events would be during the evening and weekends only, not during the day. Event size would range from about 20 to a max of 150, which is set by our square foot allotment.

All the uses we're proposing for the 1<sup>st</sup> floor are allowable by right. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor is allowable but requires a special exception; part of that has to do with a parking concern, which is a valid concern. We've talked to a valet service to get a workable plan. The valet company estimates half the cars per number of guests, so we need a max of around 75 spaces. This valet company has a longstanding relationship with UPMC and will utilize the UPMC lot on the river, which has 1,500 spaces. The drop off spot would be right in front of building, pushed back as far back from the stoplight as possible, the valet would then take the car left onto 57<sup>th</sup> Street then go into the lot.

The other part we have to address is loading and unloading. We have a unique loading zone area, so we're proposing a new curb cut at back of building coming into the big open space to be able to get in and then also turn around to get out so no one has to back out of the space. There are other things that zoning cares about, like the fact that the corner area is a pit where trash swirls. We're proposing filling it in, landscaping it, and making it level to 57<sup>th</sup> Street. We're required to but also want to add trees. We submitted plans to the urban forester. I'm supposed to have 6 trees but can't figure out how to add them, so that's something we're still going back and forth on.

The trash area is also of concern to site plan review. Trash service will be hand-picked up to the street so that it won't affect 57<sup>th</sup> Street.

### Q&A

Matt Galluzzo: Before I begin, I should mention that I've worked with Liza and Doug on Salt of the Earth in Garfield years ago. I just wanted to disclose that.

Kim Faught: So you're an architect? I live across from this building. When I moved in 9 years ago, that section that's now opened in the back was all walled in.

- A: As far as I know, the previous owner was cited and had part of the building condemned. He didn't disclose that part of the building was condemned when we purchased it, so that was a surprise to us. I think there was some kind of exterior shed that he just started tearing apart.

Jesse Perkins: You mentioned events that could use catering. Would you give consideration to hiring from Lawrenceville Works? Folks would appreciate keeping the income generated in the neighborhood.

- A: We'd be totally open to that. Just starting conversations. We're architects so we know we can't run a restaurant, so we're open to it but still figuring everything out.

Kim Autore: What happens when there are competing events with the theater across the street at the Slovenski Dome? My concerns are with that parking lot, it won't be there forever perhaps? Is there a contingency plan if that lot goes away? Are you going to charge for the valet? How can you ensure that people actually use it? The artist up the street who owns the church occasionally does events and no one tells us. I am concerned about not receiving notice and the cumulative impact.

- A: We're still investigating but I think it's normally something that comes with the event. The valet charge is not extra but part of the whole structure of the event. Our goal is to keep parking off 57<sup>th</sup> Street – if our customers are fighting for parking on 57<sup>th</sup> Street, that doesn't serve us well either. We also spoke to Allegheny Cold Storage, who were also amenable to us using that lot.

Emily Schmidlapp: I am wondering about accessibility.

- A: We're going to have to add an elevator. The grade at Butler is not good but we have a good drop off zone along 57<sup>th</sup> Street with the grading there, so the grade works to our advantage for accessibility

Kyle Webster: I think this sounds really awesome. Can you clarify what you mean about the gallery?

- A: Probably more of a furniture gallery and an open air space of sorts.

Jesse Perkins: Would you give any consideration to discounts for non-profits?

- A: Sure. We're still coming up with our business model but would be happy to discuss this. It's such an incredible space and we want it to be public and non-exclusive. We want all sorts of groups to use it.
- Kim Autore: I think it's great you're rehabbing it.

Eddie Mattock: This loading/unloading area, would that be able to be used for the gallery?

- A: It's going to have a security gate on it, so I don't know if we'd leave it open.
- Eddie Mattock: Where would parking go if they're there for a gallery?
- A: We found out today we need 2 spots for zoning, so we'll add that into the loading area somehow. It's a big space.
- Kim Faught: Isn't there a space behind TJ's up towards Donson Way? Is that yours?
- A: No, that's his.

**Zoning Hearing is April 6 at 9:00 am.**