



March 5, 2018

Attn: Zoning Board of Adjustments
City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning
200 Ross St., Fourth Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Re: Zoning Case 46 of 2018, Mintwood Street

Dear Esteemed Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustments:

On behalf of Lawrenceville United, we write today in reference to Zone Case 46 of 2018. Lawrenceville United's (LU) mission is to improve and protect the quality of life for all Lawrenceville residents. LU and Lawrenceville Corporation (LC) have created a community process that provides a forum where proposed development projects can be discussed, vetted, and measured against community plans and priorities. This process enables the local community organizations to identify priority issues that will help guide conversations with the developer through the planning and construction processes.

LU and LC initially met with Lawrenceville Properties LLC and Desmone Architects on December 20, 2017, and convened an open and public community meeting on January 29th, 2018 with Desmone Architects. Notes from the community meeting are included with this letter. We thank the project team for participating in our community process and for being very responsive to questions and comments throughout the process.

During the open and public community meeting, residents expressed mostly support for the revitalization of the property and concerns about the potential effect of the project on parking, traffic, construction impact, noise, and housing prices nearby. LU thanks the project team for their willingness to minimize the disruption caused by the construction and to share a construction management plan with the community in advance of their work.

LU is neither supporting nor opposing the project. Affordability remains a crucial concern of the neighborhood, and while we support the reuse of the building and are not opposed to the project, we feel a project of this scale should address affordability to earn our support.

We have also attached a letter from a nearby resident who is unable to attend the hearing. We thank the ZBA for its consideration of our position and other impacted residents.

Sincerely,

Dave Breingan, Executive Director
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Dave@LUnited.org

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Meeting Minutes for 6th Ward Block Watch

1/29/2018, 7-8:45 p.m.

St. Augustine's Church, Lower Room

Approximately 33 people in attendance.

1. Public Safety Update – Zone 2 Police

A. **Public safety report:** Officer Antoine Davis & Sergeant Lance Hoyson presented a crime report from 2017 for all of Lawrenceville. Monthly crime reports broken down by ward will resume next month.

B. **Implicit Bias Training with Pittsburgh Bureau of Police** – Tuesday, February 6th, 6-9 p.m. at Goodwill (118 52nd Street) in the Multi-Purpose Room – all Block Watch regulars strongly encouraged to attend. RSVP to 412-802-7220 or info@LUnited.org.

C. **Thefts from auto** – 11 in 2018 already, #1 part one crime in 2017. Please remember to lock your cars and hide your valuables!

2. State Rep. Adam Ravenstahl spoke and encouraged residents to reach out to his office for any needs. His office continues to liaise with Lawrenceville United around liquor licenses and community projects.

3. Community meeting regarding Mintwood warehouse conversion – Dave from Lawrenceville United covered the ground rules.

Presentation from Desmone Architects (Jared Korchok): Vacant for over a decade. Large, 2 story space. Used to be owned by Giant Eagle. Gutted now. Building had a lot of glass in the façade at one point, but all were taken out and blocked in for warehouse. Proposing 17 units for sale with full interior parking plus small exterior parking lot. Trying to re-engage Mintwood Street while introducing new units. Creating new amenity spaces and green spaces that have been neglected. Trying to enhance the area.

6 units on lower level with interior parking. 14 parking spaces including accessible parking. There will be 29 total parking, with 21 inside and 8 in lot. 17 bike parking – 1 per unit. Was storage warehouse, which isn't allowed in current zoning. Reintroducing residential. Difficult to find another storage use – only residential made sense other than tearing down. 11 units on upper level – double height space, will introduce loft-style units. 6 integral parking spots on Mintwood Street. Rest of parking on lower level. 1,200-2,000 average square feet of units. Variation in terms of cost, changes in finishes.

Small observation deck with view of downtown. 600 SF roof space with lounge.

All windows are existing windows, just pulling out the in-fill. Only openings are for garage doors. Might have been manufacturing before warehouse. Don't know a lot about the history of the building. Built

between 1924 and 1939. Resident: Used to be Combination Window Building, at one point garage for special operations for police.

Openings for rear patios. Reintroducing street scaping and adding curb cuts.

Anticipating March 8th for ZBA. Special exception for a non-conforming use. Building is currently a non-conforming use. Residential is more in line with uses of area than previous use of storage warehouse.

Facilitated Q&A:

Kim: Lived across the street for 29 years. I'm all for beautifying the neighborhood, my big concern is where are people going to park? Currently not enough space on our side of the street and your side with existing residents. People are currently parking on that side of the street (10 plus cars parked on that side of the street). Some homes on the block have 5 vehicles, others with 2.

- Jared: Currently people are parking on sidewalk b/c Mintwood is so narrow and parking illegally. We're talking to the city about keeping street parking in between curb cuts.
- Kim: We currently don't have permit parking in the area, maybe that's something we need to address.

Dorothy: Beautiful building. My concern is Mintwood is a small street. Is there enough room for a turning radius to get into the curb cut? See this problem in other places in the neighborhood.

- Jared: We use turning radiuses to develop curb cuts for the plan. Definitely something we can look more at. Will be a typical size spot, but may encourage smaller compact cars. Garage in the lower level is full size garage, so there's an opportunity to direct larger cars there.

Ryan Champagne: How long has this building been under the same ownership, which has let it fall into disrepair?

- Jared: They've owned the building 5-7 years. Vacant for 10 years. Building itself is actually in pretty good shape on the inside. Exterior hasn't changed. Put a new roof in recent years to repair leak. Taken measures to keep interior in good shape. Haven't addressed exterior much.

Dan: Is parking optional for residents or will they be given a choice to park on the street?

- Jared: No charge for first space, option to lease a second. Parking is so valuable in Lawrenceville that having that as part of the sale is important to sell the units. Really trying to push biking by including bike storage.
- Dan: In other projects, they didn't say they would be charging for parking during community meetings.
- Jared: We have room to provide more: 2 per unit, which is the maximum allowed by the City. Could provide 5 more and I think we have space for it but it's a challenging grade. Had looked into it originally. That could still happen.

Steve: As a plumber who does a lot of work because of this construction, I'm on both sides of the same coin. Is there any way you can talk to the developer or contractor to minimize disruption from staging?

- Jared: Staging area will be in the back. Most of the work is interior but we will be pulling off in-fill. Mintwood is so tight we can't do much there without disturbing everyone there, so makes more sense to have staging in the back of the lot.

Terry: Do you anticipate any Mintwood Street closures and do you have a ballpark price?

- Jared: Regarding closures, not sure yet. Will know once we bring on contractors. Bidding in March. Will ask for construction management plan, which we can share with the community through LU. In terms of cost, want this to be comparable to other similarly-sized for-sale units in the area. Trying to keep cost down by changing some of the finishes.

Theresa: Is anybody concerned that Lawrenceville is getting crowded? Are we over-building? I work at 52nd and Butler and Butler Street is jammed every day, so is the 40th Street bridge, etc.

- Luke Desmone: If I may, I bought the bank building at Penn and Butler. Will Lawrenceville ever grow enough to sustain itself? I think the answer is yes. Our office has been there since 1992, and we're going to add to the back. Reaching a peak to keep doing this kind of project, but this one really cries for cleaning it up. We're at the peak of what the community can handle. We have enough construction right now across the neighborhood.

Samantha: Not only is the parking an issue. I don't own my house, I rent and my landlord will find any excuse to increase rent again or sell it off. I'm paying off 2 degrees and living with roommates. What about us? What about renters? The homes with lots of vehicles are renters because we have to have roommates to make living here affordable, so parking affects us. This is pushing out people like me.

- Jared: Made efforts to make it more inclusive. We also recognize that residential is the only use that makes sense. Otherwise, the only options are to tear it down or to let it sit vacant.

Darnell: I know what you're doing and I think it makes a lot of sense. How is the green space and street scape going to be maintained? Who's liable for that?

- Jared: Streetscape along Mintwood would be public right of way. Trying to introduce more street trees than what's required. Along rear, there are trees that we're putting in where it's been neglected, along with a retaining wall. Common maintenance for building and back.

Jeff: Utilities – upgrading water or sewage?

- Jared: Sewage for sure with increased usage. Utilities coming off Denny Street.
- Jeff: Any idea how much the street has to be dug up?
- Jared: Not at this point. Trying to bring off Denny Street but PWSA usually dictates that.

Ryan: Denny is one-way and it's narrow. Residents frequently make right out of driveway and go wrong way towards Penn Ave – I've seen a lot of close calls. Do we plan on making that a 2-way street or to make improvements to make that street safer?

- Jared: Traffic analysis is up in the air. City says it's not needed. Not proposing to do anything to Denny.

- Ryan: Waste removal - same owners of the building of LoLa lofts. Waste removal is late at night, really loud. Where will refuse go and how will it be accessed?
- Desmone: There are interior dumpsters that will be picked up from outside of the space. Can't say when that would occur.
- LU / Councilwoman Gross's Office: Please call us if you're having issues with trash collection outside of the city's ordinances. We've been dealing with this a lot.

Charles: Have to give it to you regarding parking. Most of us, that's our biggest concern. I was thinking about guest parking. Most places build for the unit but nothing for guests, so you've gone above and beyond. There's no real setback?

- Jared: Right.
- Charles: What about road repair? Are you working with the city? Heavy trucks and equipment is going to be a concern.
- Jared: That kind of comes back to PWSA also. Where we make improvements to get lines into the building, they'll be rebuilt along with sidewalks.
- Charles: Being a construction guy myself, is this going to be local?
- Jared: It's going to be local but we don't know who yet. We'll bid it out.

Cory: You said you haven't put out bids for contract yet, but do you have a timeframe assuming you get through zoning?

- Jared: Looking to start construction early summer, late May/early June, coincide with zoning decision and permits being ready. Open the following summer after a year.

Ryan: Question about sound. During construction, people work from home. How do you plan to deal with that disruption? After people moved in that's 17 decks facing over people's homes and lives. How do you plan to address noise?

- Jared: All the decks are inset within the L space which will keep it somewhat interior. Developer wants these to be private, for benefit of owners as well as neighbors. On construction noise, most of the renovation is interior – there will be some exterior, but will only be during business hours, not disrupting people's evenings. We can also make noise mitigation / construction impact a question in our bids for the contractors.

Jay Ann: Been on Mintwood since 1980. Used to be Keystone Mailing. Anyone else showed interest?

- Jared: Not that we know of. No one had contacted us about it. As far as we know, no one has looked at developing the site, but they might've talked to other architects.

Decks won't be open decks?

- They'll be open on one side, back side (Denny). Sounds buffers on the sides. Small observation deck on front corner facing city. Height of partition wall is 4 feet, which is greater than what the city requires – again trying to emphasize safety and privacy.

Closed discussion

- Concerns about upkeep of rest of area, specifically trash from some neighbors and Sullivan Field drainage issues causing water runoff on Cabinet Way.

3. Riverfront Interim Planning Overlay District changes – City Planning (Andrea Lavin Kossis)

Proposed zoning changes along all riverfront. IPOD stands for Interim Planning Overlay District and the Riverfront IPOD was started in 2016 – 40 plus community meetings. Passed. Meeting with people since it went down to write permanent zoning. Only 24 months so it's temporary. Trying to get permanent now to get protections in place before it goes away.

Trying to skirt certain zoning districts like high residential zones. Proposing more streamlined approach to the multitude of zoning areas along the riverfront now: RIV IMU, MU and Industrial. Purpose of IMU is to be flexible – can do office, can do residential, tech, maker space. Riverfront GI is intended to create space that's specific to industrial, since that's a strong part of Lawrenceville's heritage, creates jobs, etc. Residential in these areas often creates conflict, so we wanted to make sure that we don't allow residential in those areas to decrease those conflicts.

Mixed Use – could be mixed use along a block, either vertically (different uses within the same building on different floors) or horizontally (different uses as you go down the street).

What does this mean? – changes to site plan review. Look at plans from architect, have standards, give feedback. Will be asking, how does the proposed development interact with the community and at the pedestrian level? Anything within 200 feet of the river, all new construction of primary structures, expansion of any exterior renovation to an existing primary structure, construction or expansion of parking lots will be subject to this.

Site Development Standards: no setbacks, no FAR, building length capped at 500 feet to make sure people have physical and visual access to riverfront, impervious surface coverage limited to 75% for developments within 200 feet of river (unless environmental contamination), preserving view corridors, design standards apply.

Parking: maximums and minimums. Parking minimum reduced in half to other zoning areas, maximum would be what is currently the minimum. Different demands based on different uses. Transportation studies for anything @ Planning Commission, will talk with developers about strategies to reduce vehicles to decrease congestion on the streets. 50% of parking structure space needs to be active – not just walking past parking, but small retail, to make it a nice experience to walk past.

Curb cuts: looking to minimize. Came out of previous Lawrenceville 6th Ward Block Watch, so thanks for that recommendation.

Storm water: decreasing square footage that triggers it. Any project that has 5,000 SF in area. Smaller projects will also encourage other ways to keep water out of the sewer system in smaller ways.

Riparian buffer: Within 50' of the river, can't build. 50-95' can only fill 1/3 of that space (original IPOD). Proposing now that no development is permitted within 125' of the river unless using bonus points. 95' roughly corresponds with flood plain. In addition, in neighborhoods with industrial heritages (tend to be hottest neighborhoods), there's often poor air quality and high temperatures – one thing we can do to

address run-off is to plant trees, and along the river is one of the best places to plant trees. There are large swaths of the riverfront that are crumbling – legitimate concern that we may have to rebuild it – so this is one way to protect it. Leaving room in the future for a riverfront connected trail system.

Height: measures feet, not stories. Special exceptions: burden is on challenges, whereas with variances the burden of proof is on the person applying to prove hardship. Harder to get variance than a special exception. Height is tied to geography instead of zoning district. Minimum of 24 feet required to promote density. Base height is 45 feet. If want to go beyond that to the maximum (85' in Lawrenceville), will have to earn your way there by earning bonus points. Additional standards for buildings beyond 65 feet: shadow study, building footprint limits, etc. Trying to improve experience for people on the ground. For context: NREC is 65', Ice House is 45', Senior High Rise is 75'.

Bonus points: purpose is to build things that the community and the city needs in order to get height bonuses or build closer to river. Bonuses for on-site energy consumption, affordable housing, rainwater, public access easements/trails/amenities, neighborhood ecology (e.g. solar panels), public art, urban fabric (e.g. build parking structures that are convertible for the future). Points give you more height.

Next steps: Planning Commission next week. February 20th, starts at 2 p.m. City Council hearing also forthcoming. Public comment period now through February 19th. Will duplicate the process through City Council and will be another round of postings. For more information, please visit www.pghriverfrontzoning.com

4. Announcements & Upcoming Events

- Lawrenceville still needs Snow Angels! – accepting applications and volunteers – call 412-475-2459, 311 or go to pittsburghpa.gov/snowangels – call LU if have any issues getting a response
- 2/6, 6-9 p.m. @ Goodwill Workforce Development Center (118 52nd Street) – Implicit Bias Training for the community with Pittsburgh Police
- 2/8, 6:30 p.m. @ 3615 Butler Street – Community meeting re: liquor license transfer for Driftwood Oven (formerly Matteo's)
- 2/12, 6:30 p.m. @ TBD – Community meeting re: liquor license transfer for the Vandal (4306 Butler)
- 2/26, 7 p.m. – next 6th Ward Block Watch – topics: Update on Lawrenceville nomination for National Registry of Historic Places – March topics: A+ Schools Report to the Community, PWSA changes + Q&A
- 3/6, 6:30 p.m. at Goodwill Workforce Development Center (118 52nd Street) – Duncan Park Update
- 3/8, 200 Ross Street – ZBA hearing for Mintwood warehouse

Keep in touch: Lawrenceville United, 412-802-7220, info@LUnited.org

Arsenal - 600 new units (243 apartments currently under construction)
The Foundry (unknown number of units)
Catalyst Lofts (20 luxury apts.)
Currently under construction – townhouses on 38th and Mintwood
3607 Butler Street condos

Something must be done about the density of apartments and condominiums being built in Lawrenceville. It was just announced yesterday that the Shur Save will probably be sold to a developer with yet another complex proposed. My community cannot accommodate all of this sudden growth. The infrastructure doesn't exist for this many new residents and cars in Lawrenceville. The roads, water, sewer, electric and gas systems are old and problematic even now.

The particular development that concerns me is the proposal for a seventeen-unit condo project for Mintwood Street, a typically narrow street with no off-street parking. There are reasons that land is zoned for individual residential units. The idea that because the developers are going to provide parking for residents, the development will be good for the neighborhood is laughable. This is a street with row houses that were built in the early 1900s. I am almost certain that most of the street still has the original plumbing going to the street for water and sewer purposes. What will happen when we have an influx of thirty new people using that antiquated system? And where will their visitors park?

I've heard the argument that the tax income from these new developments will improve the neighborhood. I'm very skeptical about that. There is no guarantee at all that funds that come from these new projects will improve streets or schools or water in Lawrenceville.

Please don't let what's happened in East Liberty and the Hill District happen again in Lawrenceville. We need a vibrant variety of socioeconomic, ethnic, gender and aged residents in Pittsburgh for it to thrive and survive. This condominium project on Mintwood Street will not provide low-income housing and will negatively impact the existing neighborhood. Too many exceptions have been made regarding rezoning in Lawrenceville. Let's put a moratorium on that now and begin to plan for a future for all residents.

I'd be happy to discuss any of my concerns with you or your staff any time.

Sincerely,

Laurie Cochenour
1 March, 2018