

**Community Meeting on 186 Home Street (Ewalt House)**  
**Thursday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019**  
**Stephen Foster Community Center**

Meeting called to order at 6:30pm

Dave and Matt introduced community process, ground rules, meeting agenda, and development group, PHC Development, Inc., and their principal, Joe Casey.

**Developer Presentation**

Joe introduced himself, his partner, Matt, and his development group, PHC Development, LLC. He currently has 10 units under construction in Lawrenceville and is exclusively focused on new construction.

The proposed development is roughly 7500sqft fronting Eden Way. He indicated that he could do a by-right project. In looking into this site, he noted that they looked at what they could do by-right, and then considered financial feasibility. Given these factors, he's requesting 4 stories instead of 3 stories, but not exceeding 40 feet. He indicated that they're also requesting interior side setbacks because they are all attached, which is in context with the neighborhood. Rooftop decks and garage fronts are contemplated to face Eden Way (which is 20 ft wide) & so it requires relief from the zoning code.

In discussing potential re-use of the structure on the site, Joe noted that his analysis of the site financing and asking price would make a development not feasible.

Joe noted that he's a resident of Lawrenceville and wants to develop homes that are contextual—based on 180 block of Home. He reviewed the site plan and reiterated that the garages will be faced along Eden Way. The corner home along Home Street will have entrance along Home with 2-car garage facing Eden Way. Joe then reviewed the front elevations, which include rooftop decks that face Butler Street. Facades will include brick. The rear facades will include lap cement siding.

His business partner, Matt, then noted that the development group is committed to developing strong relationships with neighbors.

**Question and Answer:**

Bill (Home): Any potential deviation from proposed orientation?

- This is the only orientation that would work for 5 units and economically feasible.

Brian Bevin (Penn): What other developments have you completed in Lawrenceville?

- Please check out [Pennhouseco.com](http://Pennhouseco.com). Ten under construction in neighborhood.

Mary (43rd): What are building materials?

- Brick on facades, fiber cement on decks, sides brick, rear likely fiber cement or brick

Neil (57th): How might you re-use elements of site materials?

- House is giant. We have explored other options. For what we are purchasing this for, to bring this to market after making improvements would not make financial sense and not our business model. As an alternative, we are working with nonprofit organization to do a halfway house.

Neil (57th): How long has it been vacant?

- 3 years.

Beth Rupert: House belongs to us. It's an enormous house. I spoke to 100 people who inquired about the house. It has been on Zillow twice for the past 3 years. Berkshire Hathaway conducted market value analysis. The condition of the house has kept people from purchasing. It is imperative for us to sell. The proceeds of this sale will support our childcare facility. We will not sell below market. And, interested buyers could not get financed.

- Dave C: Fair market value. In January you listed for \$500,000, and dropped to \$400,000 & developer came forward.

Dave C: What is the history of this house?

- Jim W: It's a Greek Revival built in 1840 by Ewalt. The 43rd Street Bridge was known as the "Ewalt Bridge." Question to developer: Have you considered tax credits and grants for re-use?
- Joe Casey: We have not considered it. We did ask Lawrenceville Stakeholders about support. Currently, our due diligence timeline precludes us from pursuing.
- Bill Joyce: The house was rural and pre-dates the development of the neighborhood. Hire a more sensitive architect and use credits to re-use and support context.

Susan: Would you consider brick all around?

- We would consider all-brick, except for around dormer.

Sarah Ewing (47th): Worked through renovation model, yet you haven't brought in engineer. What gives?

- Based on size, acquisition cost, condition of house, and back-end appraisal concerns, we've determined that it's not feasible to re-use.

Jill Joyce (44th): It's an extremely unique house. It's one of two. What do you think someone would pay for a renovated house?

Katie McCauley: Landscaping?

- For any tree over 12" in diameter, we have to replace. A good portion of those trees in back will serve as buffer.

Mike Lynn: You're going to sell these for \$500,000 per unit? Seems to me you're gouging the market.

- That's roughly it. We are a for-profit entity.

Ashley (44th): Any thoughts about fewer units & fewer or no garage fronts? Garages are disrupting the community fabric.

- We looked at 4-unit concept. Purchase price drove us to 5-units. Off-street parking is required by zoning. Parking pressure is driving our decisions.

Andrea (City Planning). Have you considered rear parking?

- Could do a condo with common drive along Antwerp. Still consider that idea.

Mara: When does wrecking ball show up?

- Contingent upon outcome of hearing. Still need to get a demo permit.

Gracie: What is the schedule for construction?

- 12 months to deliver units. Per city code, can work 7-5pm (Monday - Saturday).

Katie (46th): Would you allow Construction Junction to salvage?

- Not much trim work. Rails are gone. Wrought Iron fence could be re-used. Brick could be re-used.

Beth: Has the history of the home. Mr. Ewalt may have not lived in the house. We have other 3 buyers in the wings looking to do a similar development like Joe. He's a good candidate and wants to work with the neighborhood.

David C: Now that they have said they're going to put a halfway house if they fail at Zoning, are they really wanting to work with the neighborhood?

Mary: I'm against this. Too dense. Poorly sited concept.

### **Closed Door Conversation:**

Bill Joyce: What is PHLF's and Preservation Pittsburgh position? Will neighborhood orgs market the site? LC is not going to intervene.

Beth: it's imperative for us to transact on the property for my business. We need to close now

Brian Bevin: Here as board member of Preservation Pittsburgh

Neil: What are they asking from Zoning? Deb noted that they need to subdivide.

Deborah Gross: They don't have permission to build that. You cannot buy single family lot to do five homes. It has to go to planning commission to divide lots.

Bill: Worried about parking.

Karl: Worried about parking.

Bill: How will Abbey and the parking work? Need to look at that @ LC/LU.

Dave C: Can the house be designated for local historic status? Will LU/LC do it?

- Stakeholders typically lead that and we've typically deferred to them on issues of preservation.
- Mary: Stakeholders are prepared to submit an application.
- Deborah Gross: There is a long process.

Adam: If someone tries to designate property as historic, will that prevent them from selling?

- No, but it would create restrictions.

Beth: Spoke to stakeholders three years ago & two years ago. My economic livelihood hinges on this sale & we may need to get lawyers involved.

Brian: It doesn't matter if there's been a sale. A nomination just prevents external modification to the property.

Katie: I empathize with the property owners. The halfway house comment was antagonistic and problematic. I think we need to push.

Adam: If someone designates it, what about the missing historical elements?

Brian: There are 11 parts to the criteria and you need to meet one of those parts.

Interested parties have the opportunity to come forward.

Nancy: The zoning hearing will not include any of the historical elements, only the zoning considerations. Historically, LU and LC have not been involved in these types of designations.

LU/LC explained process on why Holy Family historic designation was pursued.

Gracie: Is this the 1st you've heard about the halfway house?

- LU: yes.

Dave B (LU) commended group for maintaining decorum.

Dave (46th): This is still about choice. While I sympathize the development, we have plenty of examples of re-use (Bayard School, Tryp Hotel). I'm sure we have developers in the neighborhood that can do something in our interests.

Eric Rupert (Beth's husband): Forward those people to us.

Dave B reviewed process and next steps.