

May 20, 2021

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

Re: Zone Case 110 & 116 of 2021, 5300 Duncan St / 5315 Holmes St

Dear Esteemed Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment:

On behalf of Lawrenceville United and Lawrenceville Corporation, we write today in opposition to the zoning reliefs sought for 5300 Duncan Street and 5315 Holmes Street.

Lawrenceville United's (LU) mission is to improve and protect the quality of life for all Lawrenceville residents. Lawrenceville Corporation (LC) serves as the catalyst and conduit for responsible growth and reinvestment in the Lawrenceville community. Together, we 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 us to identify priority issues that will help guide conversations with developers through the planning and construction processes.

In keeping with the City of Pittsburgh's Registered Community Organization (RCO) legislation, our community process typically only takes projects of four residential units or more. Because these zoning reliefs were tied to just one new construction home each, these projects didn't initially trigger our community process, in which we would reach out to the developer and host a community meeting.

Yet, due to expressed community concern about the impact of front-facing integral garages in our neighborhood, we reached out to the applicant, E Properties & Development, to share concerns and see if they would be willing to work with the community and proceed without the integral garages. E Properties & Development politely indicated that they would continue with their plans as is. Consequently, we are opposed to the zoning relief sought today.

Integral garages and their corresponding curb cuts are serious impediments to the neighborhood fabric in dense single-family neighborhoods like Upper Lawrenceville. By introducing the ingress and egress of cars along the pedestrian experience, these developments would impair the safety and accessibility of walkable residential blocks like Duncan and Holmes Street. If constructed as currently designed, children and families travelling to and from the nearby Duncan parklet would face new safety concerns as vehicles pass over the sidewalk. These driveways would also introduce new slopes to an otherwise flat sidewalk, potentially impairing accessibility for folks with wheelchairs and parents with strollers.

Beyond interruptions to the pedestrian experience and related safety and accessibility concerns, the inclusion of these integral garages would also degrade community connections at an already tense time of rapid demographic change. Instead of the on-street neighborly interactions typical of dense neighborhoods like Upper Lawrenceville, new neighbors would pass into and out of their homes without ever having to walk along the street, missing the casual, daily neighbor interactions critical to building community. This is only exacerbated by the fact that integral garages preclude the ability to plant street trees which, beyond improving social cohesion, provide numerous other benefits like air pollution abatement, mental health benefits, and shade.

While the consequences for the community are irrefutable, the potential benefit to the future residents seems negligible at best. Because both of these locations are blocks away from the business district on Butler Street, access to nearby on-street parking for the future residents of these houses is unlikely to be an issue.

For all these reasons and more, we urge the Zoning Board to deny the variances sought today. Doing so would be in line with the Mayor's and City Council's commitment to addressing the growing harm caused by integral garages, concerns most recently iterated by community organizations and residents during the April hearing related to the R1A amendment. LU and LC support that legislation and are working with the City to encourage more robust measures to prevent integral garages on the frontages of rowhouse neighborhoods.

In-fill residential development has been done without disrupting the fabric of the neighborhood and with support from the community, and it can be done again. We remain willing to work with the developers to modify the plans and avoid these negative impacts, but we oppose the plans as they currently stand.

We thank the Zoning Board for its consideration.

Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Lauren Byrne' and the signature on the right is 'Dave Breingan'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren Byrne Connelly
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