

CDAM on 3634 Penn Avenue  
Meeting Notes

12/14/23 at New Alliance Federal Credit Union (3709 Butler Street)

3:25-11:58 Introduction and Ground Rules and Community Process  
Overview

11:59-29:53 Developer Presentation by Craig Riegelneegg (AE7) and  
Eric Jester (New Burgh Development)

- Zoning is Local Neighborhood Commercial but affected by being near single use
- Tentatively calling the apartments 37th Street Apartments
- Will need a zoning variance because they 50 ft too tall
- Facade of building is being designed to fit in with the neighborhood
- Vegetation and wooden slats will be used for privacy and for aesthetics

Q&A

Q: Andrew Moss, 38th Street. It looks good, but from how you outlined the zoning it looks like you're well over the two to one. And it looks like this is about a five story building as well so I'm assuming you're going to be seeking height. You're going to be seeking a variance for the floor area ratio. I assume you're over the 90 percent watt coverage as well. So there's a bunch of variances you're seeking, right?

A: No, the height is measured from the midpoint of the front street, that's typically defined as where the main access entry to the building is. Ours is along 37th. We additionally have a mezzanine that fits within the technical floor but provides within that unit a third of that space. It is essentially just an extra high unit with a small mezzanine above, but it's mainly open to below, so that allows for access to a roof terrace. We're still below our 45 ft. In terms of the floor area ratio, these are open air balconies and breezeways by which you'd access the units. We're close to the two to one, but we're about 1.98 for floor area ratio. Having open air balconies is going to reduce our carbon

footprint. We're at close to 90 percent without the additional jog, although with that incorporated into the site...Watt coverage is more forgiving than the other standards so we're pretty compliant there.

Q: Hi my name is Christine Brill. I live on Penn Avenue in the third house right up there so I'll be looking at this every day. I don't understand how there will be 50 units. How is the organization and how is the circulation?

A: The townhouses basically happen at grade level. As you move up the slope they are staggered along that path and some of them are flats. We call them all townhouses as a short hand to indicate the way they meet the street. We have three floors, and the third incorporates the mezzanine.

Q: So are there any units that have interior stairs that are multi level besides the mezzanine? Will they be true townhouse with multiple floors?

A: Yes, four of five of the units will have two stories.

Q: My name is Dave Gritzer. I live directly across on Penn Avenue. So the entry and exit to the main parking level is off Penn?

A: Yeah

Q: You don't have one cutaway there?

A: One curb cut, yeah.

Q: So what's the one up on 37th?

A: That's the pedestrian entry. The only entry for parking is either that way or onto Woolslayer. And Woolslayer only accesses these on grid parking.

Q: You're anticipating you'll have enough parking for everybody in those areas?

A: Yes, and the ratio we are at is .7 per unit. That's the code requirement but I think that bears out based on patterns of use in Lawrenceville. We expect that to be adequate for now.

Q: Is that going to require a traffic light at 37th and Penn?

A: No, it's all together a pretty low volume garage. It's only got 26 spaces inside. We'll be looking into that, we have a traffic engineer retained on the project as well so we're beginning some of those discussions now. We're also in discussions with DOMI.

Q: Right down the corner there on 36th Street, I'd say about once a month there is almost an accident because cars are going speeding up and down Penn Avenue all the time. The visibility is challenging because of coming up the hill or down the hill. And I know when you're coming out of a garage the visibility is pretty low when getting up to the door. I'm very concerned about a gate situation where you don't see until you're out into the sidewalk. I'm also surprised that DOMI is letting you do this because it is an LNC district. They don't like curb cuts and I know there's a strong tendency to put entrances to parking off on either the alley or the side street, so I'm super concerned about that, not just for drivers but people walking up and down.

A: Pedestrian safety is going to be top of mind as we develop how this works. We looked at access via Woolslayer, but we said is it possible for us to do this? We looked at ramping, the distances, the dimensions and it just made the building nonviable.

Q: As a neighbor, we've asked for stop signs and traffic calming because people have nothing between 40th Street and down to Butler Street and there's been several car crashes actually as you turn that bend. Just know I think this is a part of a broader discussion about safety.

Q: When is your projected date to break new ground?

A: We have a lot of steps between now and then so we're not firm on that. We probably just need to get through zoning and some of our entitlements process before we can look that far into the future.

Q: Will the parking along Penn Avenue be eliminated?

A: I think maybe two spaces for the curb cut.

Q: Will this development have any sustainability design features such as rooftop solar, greenroofs, all electric units, EV charging, etc.

A: So we're exploring EV charging, the building will probably be all electric, and the thing we're most proud of is the exterior corridors. So we've just eliminated a whole lot of space that would otherwise have to be heated and cooled.

Q: Is this a mixed income community? If so, what are the income limits and how many of the units will be subsidized?

A: It is a mixed income community. Ten percent of the units will be at fifty percent of the median income. I can't remember the exact income range, I want to say it's twenty thousand per year. We are happy to accept section 8.

Q: My name is GL Johnson. I personally live on Denny Street, several houses down from the site. I'm also with the office of Councilwoman Deb Gross, District 7. It's not a residential parking permit zone right now. I know a lot of folks are concerned about the effect of there being less than one parking spot per unit and spill over onto the streets. Would you be willing to exempt the units on the lot from any residential future permit parking?

A: I think we're adequately parked based on what we know of the market.

Q: Do you know if the plan is to rent these units out or to sell them?

A: This is intended to be a rental.

Q: Since you don't know for sure which variances you'll be asking for, will you come back to the community once you do have those and have a second community meeting so we can actually talk about what is being approved or not approved?

A: We're looking at residential compatibility height and parking special exception as the only issues we'd be subject to. If something else comes up in the review, even pre-ZBA, we'd be required to come back and speak to that. This is us coming to you saying this is a

potential variance. It might not even be triggered. I'd be quite surprised if they brought up a variance they hadn't already mentioned with us because we've been in contact with city planning quite a bit.

Q: Have you guys considered vacating Wolfslayer alley because you own both sides of it and it's a dead end and then consolidate this all into one parcel?

A: The problem is this is public and the city maintained that seventy feet.

Q: I know you don't know when you're breaking ground but do you have any idea?

A: Let's cross our fingers for 2024.

Q: What role do you have in requesting safety measures in place for the entry and exit of the building for autos?

A: A traffic engineer just recently became involved with the project, and we've begun working through this with DOMI. We don't have a detailed report on that yet because it's not developed enough. I do want to be clear that we did not want to put this garage entrance on Penn Avenue. The challenge was the lot is fighting with us. I run on Penn Avenue probably three times a week, I've been there when a car is pulling out and it's not comfortable.

Q: Will you come back to present the final design of the buildings? We've seen a lot of uninspiring buildings recently.

A: Yeah, we'd be happy to come back and show you.

Q: How do we as a community have input with the traffic engineer. Can you share how our input can be considered?

A: I'm happy to collect any comments you guys have, even over time. We're happy to maintain some sort of conversation about it.

Q: I actually think it would be safer if there wasn't a garage door, just because it's one more barrier to visibility. I know we did that on the 4080 building down off Doughboy Square. There's a garage on 34th

Street and there's one off Penn, and I think that's a better scenario than a fast bob. Can you also tell us about the community seating area on 37th and Penn?

A: That was something that was meant to articulate the sense of sensitivity and approach we're taking. I can't guarantee that we're going to be able to provide seating in that configuration in that space.

Q: Bloomfield has done a good job of providing seating in the neighborhood. I'd almost rather just see something sitting on the curb? I don't know if it's allowed, but it would be valued and it would be used and build community. I don't think it needs to be a part of the facade to make it work.

Q: I also wanted to bring up Doughboy Square as an example. We want the safety of the garage to be more than just putting up a mirror.

Q: Consider DOMI putting in a flashing crosswalk going across Penn from 37th.

Q: Would you consider helping the city to pay for traffic calming?

A: We're happy to work with the city to fix it.