

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes of the Meeting of November 15, 2016
Beginning at 2:00 p.m.

PRESENT OF THE COMMISSION: Chairwoman Christine Mondor,
Askey, Burton-Faulk, Deitrick, Dick, Pezzino

PRESENT OF THE STAFF: Gastil, Layman, Hanna, Rakus, Miller,
Dash, Everett, Young, Holloway

AGENDA ITEMS COVERED IN THESE MINUTES

<i>Item</i>	<i>Page No.</i>
1. Project Development Plan #16-165, 632-634 Fort Duquesne Boulevard, exterior renovation/dwelling units	2
2. Continued: Redevelopment Certification Area, URA Greater Hill Redevelopment Area	4
3. Plan of Lots: Cook Consolidation Plan, 1404 Compromise Street, 24 th Ward	
4. Plan of Lots: Wadsworth Consolidation Plan, 2528 Wadsworth Street, 5 th Ward	
5. West End Village Apartments Plan of Lots, 119 Steuben Street, 20 th Ward	

Ms. Mondor chaired today’s meeting and called the meeting to order.

A. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

On a motion duly moved by Ms. Dietrick and seconded by Ms. Askey the minutes from the November 1, 2016 meeting were approved.

B. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Mondor stated that the Commission was in receipt of no correspondence.

C. DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS (See **Attachment A** for staff reports.)

1. Hearing and Action: Project Development Plan #16-165, 632-634 Fort Duquesne Boulevard, exterior renovations/dwelling units

Ms. Rakus made a presentation in accord with the attached staff report. Ms. Rakus stated that the redevelopment of the sign is not part of this proposal. Ms. Rakus said there is one change from the briefing and that is the removal of the balcony over Ft. Duquesne Boulevard. Ms. Rakus recommended approval of the proposal and read the staff recommended motion into the record.

Mr. Todd Reidbord, Walnut Capital, provided an overview of the project and stated that this building is the old Easter Seals Building. He stated that they will be seeking historical tax credits to restore the original façade of the building. Mr. Reidbord stated that they met with the town community organizations and they are generally in support of the project. They have met with Alco parking to secure parking for use by their tenants.

Kevin Rutledge, Strada Architecture, provided a PowerPoint presentation of the project and the scope of work. Mr. Rutledge said they will have twice the area for electrical vaults but it will impact the ability to plant street trees but they will coordinate that.

Mr. Rutledge added that there are twenty-three type B units that are compatible and everything is fully accessible. They are investigating green roof features for the patio area.

The Chairwoman called for comments from the Public.

David Demko, Scenic Pittsburgh, wanted to share his view of the blight of high wall signs and stated that they will oppose the reuse of the current apparatus on the roof of the building when a proposal for same comes forward.

There being no more comments from the Public, the Chairwoman called for questions and comments from the Commissioners, there being none, the Chairwoman called for the motion.

MOTION: That the Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh approves Project Development Plan #16-165, filed by Strada LLC on behalf of the property owner, Radical Duquesne Investments, for exterior renovations and new residential units at 632-634 Fort Duquesne Boulevard, with the following conditions:

1. Final construction plans including final site plan and elevations shall be submitted for review and approval by the Zoning Administrator prior to an application for a building permit.
2. An application for an Administrator's Exception for a reduction in loading spaces provided shall be submitted for review and approval by the Zoning Administrator prior to an application for a building permit;

Betty Pickett, 519 Heldman Street, 40 year resident and is concerned about re-gentrification and the sidewalk conditions. Ms. Pickett stated that there are a lot of absentee landlords in the area. Would appreciate that the developers that do come in leave the sidewalks and streets in an acceptable manor while working and after.

Geneva Jackson, 234 Lombard Street, said that they just had to endure the work on Bentley Drive and one of the streets in the area, Nye Way, has never been addressed and nothing on the other side of the street has been done. Ms. Jackson said she has been calling 311 and it still has not been addressed.

J. W. Kim, Housing Authority of Pittsburgh, spoke in support of the certification and it is a tool that can be used for fundraising for improvements. Stated that they just received a grant for Bedford Dwellings to improve the area. HUD grant applications requires this type locally driven/sponsored program and we receive extra points on our applications for this certification.

Edna Townsend, 611 Protectory Place, is concerned that the value of her property will decrease and doesn't understand how the area can be considered blighted when there is new housing going up in the area.

Emma Lucas Darby, 566 Soho Street, is concerned with the designation and doesn't want it developed to the point that it is gentrified. Doesn't feel it was presented to the residents in a form that they can understand exactly what the outcome will be. Asks that the residents be kept informed.

Councilman Daniel Lavelle, explained that this designation is too help the residents and to help the city obtain additional resources to attempt to address the concerns that have been set forward. Many of the concerns, such as sidewalks are the homeowner's responsibility and is an issue that the City of Pittsburgh has to address with homeowners. The concerns over loosing property value, based on prior areas that have been certified this is not the case. The concerns about older people being priced out, that is for the City to do. Councilman Lavelle said that they will be dealing with an affordable housing trust fund in Council that will assist with this. The designation will help the City improve the district and Councilman Lavelle expressed his desire to see this approved.

Edna Townsend, requested to speak again, and stated that she is only one of 70 residents in Robert Square, they hold the meetings at 2:00 p.m. so that people that work can't attend. Would like to see evening meetings so that residents will be better informed about the meaning of blighted.

Juanita Seal, stated that she was born and raised in the Hill District, stated that she has more questions than requests and stated that she would like to see a traffic study and would like a copy of the presentation before she leaves here today. Ms. Seals said she received a lot of misinformation concerning the date and time of this meeting and would like to see this on television also.

There being no more comments from the Public, the Chairwoman called for questions and comments from the Commission members.

Ms. Dietrick asked to see the slide that showed the dates and times of meetings that were held concerning this project. Ms. Dietrick asked about a consensus meeting. People in the audience were speaking but not audible on the recording. Ms. Dietrick stated that there is a recurring problem in the hill were people feel that they have not been made informed and they have a feeling of exclusion and there really isn't a reason for that. Ms. Dietrick asked if they run any other form of communication with the neighbors through other types of media. Ms. Dietrick also stated that she is very surprised that the Hill CDC isn't present at this meeting, they are meant to be the leader in development and there is no letter from them.

Ms. Stanger stated that she is not certain which one was an evening meeting, she is certain there was one. On methods of communication that is a great point, their board meetings are at 2:00 p.m. and aside from the letters and meetings there was information in the Councilman's newsletter. They are open to other methods of communication and she is not certain why the Hill CDC is not present.

Charmalene Almer, stated that she is a representative of Pastor Victor Grigsby and was sent to the meeting to gather information but no opinion.

Ms. Dick asked if the Councilman's newsletter go to all Hill District residents. Councilman Lavelle said that it does as often as possible but they can only mail to half of the district because of budget issues. They do send out an e-blast with the information. Councilman Lavelle said that he does know that when the Hill CDC was approached the response they received was that they were still meeting with the URA but they were alright with this meeting moving forward today.

Ms. Askey asked to be reminded as to where this will go next and Mr. Layman said the vote today is the final vote.

Ms. Mondor thanked everyone for coming and thanked them for making the effort and airing their concerns. Ms. Mondor asked what the URA has seen in other districts and asked that they speak more on the additional approval processes and who receives any funding or additional resources.

Ms. Stanger stated that this is not a program or a project, it is a designation, what happens after the Commission approves or doesn't, they work with the community on redevelopment efforts, this does not secure money or impose loans. What it does is allow the government to check a box when other entities want to apply for funding or raise money for the district. This would require that the URA go to City Council for approval for any sale of property in the area.

Ms. Mondor wanted to confirm that the September meeting was an evening meeting from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Ms. Dietrick asked with this designation are parcels then able to apply for funding that they wouldn't be approved for without this. Ms. Stanger said she is not certain for homeowners. Ms. Stanger said for a TIF for a developer it would be required.

