

Development Activities Meeting Report (Version: 12/20/2019)

This report created by the Neighborhood Planner and included with staff reports to City Boards and/or Commissions.

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: Uptown Tech / 304 Jumonville	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): RCOs, community organizations, residents, other developers.
Parcel Number(s): 11-K-276	
ZDR Application Number: DCP-ZDR-2020-03908	
Meeting Location: Virtual (Zoom)	
Date: 7/16/2020	
Meeting Start Time: 6:00 p.m.	
Applicant: Westrise Capital / Desmone Architecture	Approx. Number of Attendees: 17
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Planning Commission approval	

How did the meeting inform the community about the development project?

Ex: Community engagement to-date, location and history of the site, demolition needs, building footprint and overall square footage, uses and activities (particularly on the ground floor), transportation needs and parking proposed, building materials, design, and other aesthetic elements of the project, community uses, amenities and programs.

Developer described their desire to adaptively reuse the building for tech uses and be consistent with the desires of the community. Identified an oversight that they did not engage with Hill CDC and plan to correct this immediately. Presented the location, history of building and what they are planning to restore. Restore loading dock, replace doors, replace windows, allow for more natural light. Adding wall to enclose parking area on Jumonville. Looking at how to make the project more sustainable, including landscaping in the parking lot, pervious pavers being considered, reuse existing planter wall. Noted they are keeping the 10 existing parking spaces. Planting trees along the Boulevard of the Allies. Included ADA and van parking within the building to improve access to the elevator. Also included interior bike parking/storage. Presented images of materials they are using including plantings and species. Top floor will be office.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
Who are your target tenants?	Developer walked through the kinds of spaces, were thinking about office/tech/flex tenants, but COVID may be changing that. CBRE has been bringing through potential tenants, including tech, data, robotics. We're happy to walk anyone through the building and be more flexible. The first floor has 18 ft clearance height which is attractive to a lot of tenants. Would like to work with community groups around employment opportunities. We can keep you updated, but no one yet has come in.

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<p>What is your plan for MBE participation for project and tenants? Referenced Greater Hill District Master Plan targets.</p>	<p>Have used MBEs and WBEs in past projects. Reed Building Supply is an MBE providing materials, Klavon is an WBE. Still at early stage in the process. Would take your referrals. This is very important to us as a team. Only work so far has been debris removal which was done by WBE and VOB.</p>
<p>What are your plans for affordable commercial space so that residents of the Hill District could be tenants?</p>	<p>Don't see it as a retail space, geared toward tech/flex. As tenanting happens, we can keep you up-to-date.</p>
<p>What is the cost per square foot for commercial tenants?</p>	<p>Still trying to understand that with COVID, changed a lot since when they started. There's a lot of risk for this kind of project right now. Second floor lends itself to office tenants, first floor can be anything from tech, robotics, warehousing, etc. Prices range from \$10-30/sf, triple net leases are not allowed because this is an Opportunity Zone. Activating this space is important, been vacant for over a year and had become very trashy. Cleaned that up and are monitoring it. Neighbors have helped them to reduce graffiti. Adding ADA access is very important. Evaluating parking option so that ADA van can be inside or outside. Want to exceed the code, nice to have options.</p>
<p>What's your target? Proforma? What did you plan for? Do you have an anchor tenant or what you think is needed on the market?</p>	<p>We've had a range of \$12-25/sf. Depends on the tenant improvement. If this was a lab facility, those tenant improvements are much more expensive so the costs would go up. No tenants. This is speculative.</p>
<p>Black community has been left out of meds, eds, and tech sectors. Hill District is losing residents. City produced report noting how difficult Pittsburgh is for black women in particular. Access to the space should be more than just tenants, but also the feel of the space and if it is integrated into the neighborhood and is approachable.</p>	
<p>What is not allowable in the Opportunity Zone? Are you using Opportunity Zone funds? If you're not using the funds, are you still required to meet their requirements?</p>	<p>Triple net lease is not allowed. We have to look at a gross lease. This is part of why the range is so large, because we can't separate out components of rent. We're not using Opportunity Zone funds. Developer described the details of Opportunity Zone investments and that this project is not receiving money from an Opportunity Zone Fund. This is the developer's funds based on exciting opportunity.</p>
<p>Is the feedback Uptown Partners provided to the developer available?</p>	<p>Uptown Partners says they can provide it. This person should email Uptown Partners.</p>
<p>How was this advertised?</p>	<p>Uptown Partners advertised it using their email list, social media (Facebook, Twitter). City posted on the DAM page. Hill CDC did two email blasts, Facebook, email to developer's stakeholders list.</p>
<p>Is Uptown Partners' Strategic Plan available?</p>	<p>Yes, it's on the Uptown Partners website.</p>

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Don't do the bare minimum for accessible parking.	
Can the developer talk about traffic calming on streets around the building.	Working with the City's traffic engineers, but would be happy to hear ideas. The project does eliminate one of the entrances off of Jumonville which should reduce traffic.
Considering impacts of COVID, is there a factual reason (financial, scheduling, organizational hardship) for why the developer didn't present to the Hill District Development Review Panel before today.	Previous architects said they reached out to all community organizations. They did most of the public engagement, but were then removed from the project, and this got lost in the changeover of the design team. It's not acceptable that there hasn't been any communication. The development team will be in contact immediately.
Have accessible parking outside in front of the building for people who can't walk far.	They are looking at putting in both interior and exterior accessible parking spaces. Once you're inside the building there is direct access into the building. The idea was to make it easier when there is inclement weather.
Are you adding two curb cuts to Tustin?	They are adding one new one, but the rest are existing. One of the existing is gravel and will still require an application.
Why is this project important? Why necessary? What community benefits does it provide?	<p>Importance: Activating an old vacant building that has blighted the community, been dirty and unsafe.</p> <p>Necessary: Revitalizing the community involves reusing existing buildings, urban mix of uses, in this case bringing in new tech/flex uses.</p> <p>Benefit: Will increase attractiveness and value of the neighborhood. Vacant building was not contributing anything positive. Hope they are honoring history of the building which was built mid-20th century for employment use and want to reuse the building with new type of employment use. Want to know if there are ways they can better represent the community in terms of design.</p>
Consider more than just the physical structure when you look at history. Think about identity and values of the Hill District community in addition to the design.	
Residents across the street are concerned about screen or wall between the building and the rest of the neighborhood. Also, could create a safety problem by affecting visibility.	Zoning Code requires screening either physical or landscaping for parking. Landscaping screening would be 5 ft deep which would reduce parking spaces on the site and cause more parking in the rest of the neighborhood. Screening meets code and will have transparency and be low enough that people will be able to see in, see cars coming in and out, so shouldn't affect visibility.
Would residents have access to the space? Such as a public computer lab?	Depends on the users. If the tenant is a co-working space, then the opportunity may present itself. Without tenants, they don't know.

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
Can you work with the community to provide free wifi for the community?	There's a cell tower on the lease. For wifi, that's a tenant-driven question. Will let the community know what happens.
Can you provide a park on roof?	For safety issues no.
Can you talk about local W/MBE opportunities to get discounts on leases?	Looking at all options. Don't have answers yet.
I see steps inside the door. Why not have a ramp?	There is both. ADA accessible entrances from Tustin and Jumonville.
Have there been meetings with residents adjacent to the development? What are their top 3 concerns and how are they being addressed?	Team met with Uptown Partners, went to public meetings they held. Uptown Partners added that they have a resident design committee where the project was reviewed. Take into consideration the community plan which had significant community input. All the concerns of the committee were addressed. Included need for lighting on Tustin Street where safety has been issue, getting landscaping on Boulevard of the Allies and Jumonville, color and other aesthetics issues.
Consider making the loading dock area into a café.	
Resident across the street says this is their first exposure to the developers.	We worked with Uptown Partners, but have not gone door-to-door. We are happy to connect with the residents on an ongoing basis.
Development looks like an island. How is it integrated into the neighborhood? Techies all work from home, but what about retail?	The developer just doesn't know about the tenants, it's open for offers. This is an existing building. The immediate neighbors are a UPMC shuttle facility, and an old service repair station, and then there are two multifamily homes nearby. Aside from Jumonville, you don't really see the scale of the building. There are lots of other warehousing buildings around like this one. Not changing that existing character.
There's a lot of parking. Can some of this become green space instead?	Barely meeting code. Don't have that much on this particular site.
Loading dock plan is problematic for residents because they want to reduce traffic. Most residents don't use cars and don't want their neighborhood to be used as a parking lot.	The trucks that would access the building would be the same size as what UPMC is using adjacent to the site.
Were both RCOs notified about the project at least 10 days ago?	Yes. Hill CDC said that the Department of City Planning provided the information about the project.

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
You also own the big parking lot down the street, are there plans for that space yet?	No. No plans at the moment.
Concerned about revitalizing the community, when what they see is cleaning up the building, and not fully engaging community organizations. Endorsing questions from Hill CDC and Hill Consensus Group.	
How does COVID affect tenanting? Will there be a specific space set aside for minority businesses?	CBRE is actively working on tenanting. Noted the agent. Please feel free to reach out.
How is “revitalize” not the same as “gentrify”?	We’re looking at fixing up an existing building both for the building and the community. We’re not looking to shift people out of this community, we want to attract people to it, provide jobs and opportunities. Important to growing the community.
How is this project going to benefit black people?	Opportunities as part of the development project and in the spaces. Just don’t know yet about the occupants.
Are there any prospective tenants?	No.
Are you seeking an anchor tenant?	The entire space is being advertised for lease. We can have one tenant or subdivide, just don’t know.
Do you have the power to dedicate any of the space to the community? The developer/owner can do this. Dedicating space to the community could make amends with community you didn’t do a good job of engaging. If you leave it up to tenants, no one can control that.	We will consider it but can’t make a decision at this moment. Can’t give you a specific time frame. In terms of community space outside the building, there are very limited spaces that are safe that aren’t already used for parking. Boulevard of the Allies is very unsafe.
Could provide studio space in the building. A mural doesn’t help the rest of the artists. You need to re-examine the programming so that there is a clear commitment to contributing to the community. Should have broader discussion about the parking lot on Forbes.	Didn’t reference a mural. We appreciate your input and will take it into consideration.
Can we have a community benefits agreement to get things like free wifi and community space in the building? Who do I need to talk to in order to get a formal answer or commitment?	We are looking at different ideas but can’t commit to them at this time. We’ll look into the requirements and be in touch with Hill CDC immediately.
You spoke with an RCO but not directly with residents.	
Uptown Partners and the developers are not thinking creatively or equitably about the project.	Uptown Partners response is that the project was reviewed against the plan created by residents which included creating more employment space and opportunities. All committees are on the website and we would be happy for you to join them.

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
Issues brought up tonight should be addressed before this project moves forward.	
If you build a park in the parking area, this would make the community feel better about the project.	
Can the City require the developer to create a community benefits agreement?	DCP: No. We don't have that power. Most community benefits agreements we're aware of are between community organizations and the developer directly.
What is the timeline to completion?	So many COVID starts and stops, things are very fluid.
Want the community plan to be implemented through the project. Want the developer to work collaboratively with the community to go beyond the requirements.	
How do you go beyond the project to avoid displacement?	Not sure how to answer the question.
How long to you think the building will be vacant?	Can't determine this due to COVID and other factors.
How about looking at the p4 framework and rethinking the project in relationship to that?	Don't know what that is. Will have to look at that.
You should also look at the All-In Pittsburgh Plan.	Thanks for this.
When are you planning to go before a public hearing?	Commend staff on working through COVID to get things going, but the delays are significant and it's not clear when we'll get there. DCP: The first hearing can be no sooner than 30 days from today, but Planning Commission has set dates and busy agendas, so it's a process to coordinate with Zoning and Development Review Staff.
Would you be willing to continue to work with the community on this project to make sure it's better supported? Seems that space for residents is really important from the comments tonight.	Yes. We'll be contacting the Hill CDC immediately to overcome shortfalls of previous architect in outreach. We will continue to be in touch throughout the project. Feel that input from Uptown Partners has been very helpful in making it a better project.
If you build it out as you have designed, do you have contingencies for COVID? Can the build out be repurposed at a later stage if need be?	We are not fitting out the interior spaces until we have tenants, so there won't be a need to rip things out in respond to changing market. Tenants like to see a clean space, so the exterior work is very important to the viability of getting people into the project and seeing its potential.
How many tenants do you expect in terms of building out the space? Is it first come, first served or who are you looking for? Given that response, would you consider having a least one spots being for a business that provides employment opportunities for local residents. Couldn't you market the building that way? You could consider who the tenants are based on this.	The building is likely to result in one to three tenants. CBRE is handling all the tenanting. I would hope that all tenants would hire local residents, but they control that, not us. We are happy to encourage them and make suggestions but can't force them. Need to see what the tenant interest is in the market, and we can work from there.
Believe you can include a clause in the lease to force tenants to require local hiring. If this is supposed to be a	

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tech center, there should be requirements about how residents will be hired.	
MetaMesh Wireless Communities has a plan for a public wifi network, so you might collaborate with them. Uptown Task Force Community Subcommittee has been in the loop about that and can tell you more.	
When will you provide feedback to the community?	We're going to circle back to the Hill CDC immediately. Some of these will take more discussions and work. Hill CDC: We'll make sure we talk to them about the Development Review Panel process.
This project is gentrification and the developer has no plans for the community or the black residents who live there. The University of Pittsburgh shouldn't be allowed to develop anything in our community.	Note: This comment came in just as the meeting was closing and the applicant did not have time to respond.

Other Notes

Prior to the developer presentation: Uptown Partners presented that the development team had multiple meetings with their staff before going through the community's Real Estate and Development Committee. This resulted in Uptown Partners providing a letter of support although there are some final small details that they are in discussion with the applicant about. The Hill CDC presented that they have not been contacted by this developer and only learned about the project from the Department of City Planning. The developer has not gone through the Development Review Panel.

Planner completing report: Derek Dauphin and Stephanie Joy Everett