

Development Activities Meeting Report (Version: 06/24/2020)

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

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: Redevelopment of Warehouse for Office/Flex Space at 6550 Hamilton Ave	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Larimer Consensus Group
Parcel Number(s): 125-E-170	
ZDR Application Number: DCP-ZDR-2021-01620	
Meeting Location: Virtual via Zoom, as part of Larimer Consensus Group’s monthly Open Body Meeting	
Date: 5/6/2021	
Meeting Start Time: 6:00 PM	
Applicant: ForeFront Development Group, with NEXT architecture	Approx. Number of Attendees: 28
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA), variance for parking encroachment into required side yard setback	

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.

- Chad Wheatley of ForeFront Development Group and Nick Miller of NEXT architecture presented the project to the community at the Larimer Consensus Group’s monthly Open Body Meeting.
- C. Wheatley began by discussing the goals of the project, which he identified as creating short-term jobs for the community through construction and bringing long-term job opportunities through new office and retail tenants. He mentioned that the goal of presenting at the meeting was to obtain feedback from the community and learn what the project team can do better.
- C. Wheatley said that Jim Fleming, who was present in the meeting, has been the owner of the property for over 40 years. ForeFront Development is assisting Jim with the redevelopment of the property, as he sees value in upgrading the property to attract “higher and better use” tenants, such as office and retail. The property is currently occupied by Transtar Industries, an auto parts distributor.
- C. Wheatley went over the City Planning process for development review, mentioning that the project team recently completed Design Review with their response to the Urban Design Targets. He said that the project team is currently in the middle of Site Plan Review. They will then go to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) to apply for a variance to extend their parking area into the required side setback on the eastern side of the property. C. Miller mentioned that the owner of the neighboring property finds the side setback acceptable and is excited about the project.
- N. Miller summarized the layout of the existing site, which consists of a 1920s-era building on the western side, with a 1960s warehouse in the center, and a parking lot and storage hut on the eastern side. The storage hut is intended to be demolished to extend the parking lot.
- N. Miller then showed photos of the existing buildings, including the 1920s entryway and loading bay and the 1960s warehouse. He also showed several site context photos from adjacent vantage points down Hamilton Avenue and Putnam Street.

- N. Miller then showed a survey of the property, followed by a site plan and an elevation. He explained that no additions would be made to the building and that the building footprint would stay the same. Only the façades are to be renovated.
- The parking lot is to be enlarged to fit 59 cars. Permeable pavement is to be installed in the middle of the parking lot, with the parking lot sloping to the area of the pavers. A staircase is also to be added to access the parking lot from the Hamilton Avenue streetscape. The existing retaining wall, which will be refurbished, will screen the parking area. The storage hut is to be demolished to accommodate the new parking. Additional street trees are to be planted, and new landscaping and trees are to be added to the parking lot.
- N. Miller presented a material palette. He explained that the existing metal panels are to be painted with a new color scheme: “Grizzle Gray,” “Amber Wave” (an orange), and “Saffron Thread” (a light orange).
- A new perforated canopy/coping is to extend from the original 1920s building to the redeveloped 1960s-era warehouse section. The orange color from this canopy/coping will continue around the 1960s warehouse to face the East Busway.
- The 1960s warehouse is to see new slot windows, with a larger corner window. In the 1920s building, the original windows along Hamilton Avenue are to be opened back up.
- Depending on the tenant, the current loading bay garage doors may be replaced with new glass doors and a seating area.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
What is the correct address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6550 Hamilton Ave
Looks nice. Exactly what types of businesses are you looking for in this building, and how many jobs can this provide the community? Main thing is the make sure that people in the community have access to the jobs with the new developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We’re targeting a higher and better use office type of tenant and hope that opening up the facade that we can attract some neighborhood retail tenants; don’t have any specific tenants in mind right now. We don’t have anyone on the hook. More office driven, Class B/Class A type and more desk jobs. It’ll be a higher density of jobs per square foot than now. I can’t tell you how many new jobs will be created. We’re currently working on project in North Point Breeze that is doubling both square footage and new jobs, from 100 to 200. The total property is 50,000 square feet; if it’s all office tenants, it may be around 250 employees when all said and done.
Do you have all your financing in place to do this building?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at this time. We’re close to getting documents in place to get the construction bids but still working through the entitlement process. We have some lenders that we’ve been speaking with that are aware of the property and the project. That will hopefully be coming.
Which financial entities have you been speaking with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don’t know which ones have been engaged; that would be a question for the Lardo family.
I think PNC may have some loans available for this community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’ll make note, and we’ll find out.

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
The presentation today is to get approval from City Planning, correct?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, correct, and I think Phillip Wu, the neighborhood planner with the City is on this call. He might be able to speak more to that. • P. Wu response: "That is correct. The project will be going before the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) to get a variance for the parking to extend into the required side yard of the building. Projects that require a public hearing and that add 10 or more new parking spaces require the developer to present at a community meeting like this one tonight before the Registered Community Organization for the neighborhood, in this case the Larimer Consensus Group. More information can be found here: https://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/dev-activities-meeting."
Hamilton Ave is a part of Larimer; people don't really think of it as part of it.	
Is the footbridge near this new project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DeAnna Davis (Larimer Consensus Group): "It'll be about half a block down. I was wondering how the footbridge would tie into this new building."
If you have any questions, you can send an email to Malik and we'll forward to Chad and Nick. The design looks nice.	

Other Notes

Planner completing report: Phillip Wu