

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: Automated drive-through car wash / 4808 Baum Blvd	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Bloomfield Development Group
Parcel Number(s): 51-N-133	
ZDR Application Number: DCP-ZDR-2021-02959	
Meeting Location: Virtual via Zoom	
Date: 5/13/2021	
Meeting Start Time: 6:00 PM	
Applicant: Stephen Todorovich (owner and developer) and Ryan Indovina (architect)	Approx. Number of Attendees: 15
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA), special exception for drive-through use in the UNC District	

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.

- Steve Todorovich, who owns a chain of drive-through car washes in Pittsburgh, and Ryan Indovina, the architect, were the presenters from the applicant's side.
- R. Indovina showed a map of the proposed car wash location, which is the site of a former Chinese restaurant located in between Chipotle and Mini of Pittsburgh on the southern side of Baum Boulevard.
- R. Indovina then provided a summary of the zoning provisions for the site, including that it is located in the UNC district, that there is no minimum lot size, that the maximum floor-area ratio is 4:1, and that the maximum height in the district is four stories. He mentioned that the car wash would not come close to the 4:1 FAR and that there would be no issues with the height, since the car wash will be a one-story structure.
- R. Indovina stated that the Zoning staff told him that the proposed drive-through use requires a special exception, so the project team will be going before the ZBA. The proposed use of a car wash, additionally, is an administrator exception in the UNC district.
- R. Indovina showed a site plan with neighboring properties. He pointed out in the site plan that the number of driveways/curb cuts would be reduced from the current two (2) to one (1) single driveway/curb cut. Vehicles are to have queueing space the entire depth of the property until a drive-through loop where customers will pick up a ticket prior to going through the automated car wash. There is a garage door at each end of the car wash. At the end of the car wash, after the second garage door, vehicles will make a hard left, upon which they can either turn right out to Baum Boulevard or turn back left to four (4) parking spaces for vacuum stations. In addition to the four (4) spaces with the vacuum stations, there are to be three (3) standard parking spaces and one (1) ADA compliant space.
- R. Indovina said that the building would be staffed by at most two (2) people at any one time. There is to be a single internal office with its own bathroom on the far side of the property. In front of that, there will be the mechanical space that serves the car wash itself.

- There is to be a new 11-foot landscaped side buffer between the property and the adjacent Chipotle restaurant. The front buffer is to approximately match that of Chipotle and the Mini dealership.
- The 14-foot-high car wash bay is to be clad in fiber cement or metal tiles. The exterior of the mechanical room would be ground face concrete masonry. A canopy is to shelter the vacuum stations. A low, pre-cast concrete wall separating the car wash area from the front setback would feature a scrim wall articulated with perforated metal panels to provide screening with some transparency. The scrim wall may be used to identify the business as a car wash. Additionally, a roof assembly projecting from the car wash exit and becoming more a trellis structure when it reaches the scrim fence is to be implemented to keep fan noise tight to the ground.
- R. Indovina mentioned that there is to be a level of sustainability that is uncommon to the car wash industry. He pointed out that the sawtooth roof would feature a series of photovoltaic solar panels oriented toward the south. There is also to be a green roof tray system on top of the mechanical portion of the building for stormwater management. The landscaped buffer in front was shown as a textured rain garden assembly with native plantings, though whether a rain garden will be implemented there is not finalized. There is also the potential for electric vehicle (EV) charging at the vacuum stations, though the project team would need to work through the details of that sometime in the future in terms of pricing.
- R. Indovina showed a series of renderings and perspectives from multiple directions: a bird’s-eye view from the front, a bird’s-eye view from the southwest showing the solar panel arrays, a pedestrian view from the southwest showing the entrance to the drive-through, a zoomed-in view of the garage door and office space, and a view from the northeast showing the scrim element, trellis assembly, and front landscaped buffer.
- The project team is working with its civil engineer on the details of its stormwater management, which is almost certain to require an underground tank based on the amount of pavement.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
Just to clarify that you are asking for support from the community for the drive-through use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: That is correct.
You will also presumably need a sign variance for the car wash sign on the scrim wall?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: We have not gone down the road of pursuing the sign application yet, but we may apply for a separate permit later, if you feel it’s a nice touch to the project. If folks have any comments about it, we have not settled on the name and branding for the car wash.
The architectural reaction is that the team did a good job with the solar panel, buffer elements, and green roof. It’s all fine, but we’re working within the parameters of a car wash. We’re in between the second and third downtowns of Pittsburgh, Oakland and East Liberty. I’m thinking of the direction that Pittsburgh wants to go as a city, just thinking about the land use, thinking about the need for affordable housing, and a car wash would probably be pretty low on the list of needs. New automobiles are kind of a last century thing. Why this specific development and not something that uses the full potential of the site?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: I’m not into housing development. It’s out of my realm as to what I can develop on the site. Also, I think the property has been vacant for a few years now.
agreed, Walt!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

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Have you pursued any other types of uses for the property?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: No, I have not.
Do you have any other types of developments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: Car washes with additional uses, though with the small size of this property, this was just going to be a car wash.
I'm on the same committee as Walt. We've talked and seen some of this presentation. I want to echo Walt in that I want to applaud the architecture of this with advancing green infrastructure, but if we zoom out, think about the corridor, I know that the Baum-Centre Initiative (BCI) has a plan and I don't know if you've reached out to them, but a lot of the corridor has been trending to denser uses. I'm not convinced that this is the best use when we have six- or seven-story residential uses in the corridor. I do agree that there are drive-through type uses, but I'm not sure if we want to continue that pattern. If we build something here, it's going to last for a while and it will be here for a while. This corridor sees a lot of pedestrians and transit and a lot of people going to Oakland for school. Why here? Why did you think this site was appropriate for a car wash? Why this site particularly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: Almost every property I've bought in the city has been sites that have gone vacant for a long period of time. The property on Liberty was vacant for seven or eight years. This one had been vacant for three or four years. I just started talking to the broker. I thought it was a good location because of the traffic counts on the road, and it seemed to fit in with some of the other uses on the street.
You mentioned, potentially planting this front setback area. How are you going to water it and ensure it stays lush and beautiful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: Our strategy on our above-and-beyond type landscape environments is to work with the owner and developer to see how they're going to do the maintenance in both the summer and winter months. And certainly, introducing a rain garden type space, we're trying to hone in on our selection plants that stay green for a long time, though we're in the beginning stages of what the landscape buffer will be to see if it is a functional rain garden with percolation. If it's not able to become a rain garden, we'll work with Steve to find a landscape that's as workable as possible.
This is in one of the City's worse sewer sheds into the Allegheny River. How many gallons per day — or whatever metric you use — will be going into the sewer shed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: That will be a question I can bring up to the site civil engineer.
How far are you in the process with PWSA? I know the street will have to be torn up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: The water and sewer lines are actually both in the sidewalk, not under the street. • R. Indovina: We've started work with the state on the requirements.
When do you anticipate construction starting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: We have to go through both ZBA and Planning Commission, so that would be at least a couple of months. The DEP process will drive the boat, though.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: I haven't touched base with the civil engineers on that process, but it will be about a six-month process. • R. Indovina: So based on that schedule, probably first quarter of next year when construction may start.
<p>I would generally agree with both Bruce and Walt from earlier. Also, thinking about the traffic and use of Baum Boulevard, I was wondering how many cars can fit when waiting?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: About six cars can queue, which is in excess of the zoning requirements. That's primarily why we have the ticketing at the far back of the site.
<p>From what I've heard, this developer/this company has other companies that are car washes? What type of traffic are you seeing at those other locations? Do you have an estimate of the traffic you may see here?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: I have one on Liberty Avenue, one on Butler Street in Lawrenceville, and one on East Carson Street on the South Side. I think this one will be similar to the one on Liberty. I rarely see more than four or five cars at a time at its busiest.
<p>I'm actually trying to look at this from a different point of view. Would you be bringing more people to this area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: I don't advertise, so I'm not really generating traffic. 60-70% of my traffic is from spontaneous purchases — people who see my business driving down the street or people coming after work, for instance.
<p>Would there be an increase in traffic to the restaurants, gas stations, and other businesses in the area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: I don't think so. I don't do any advertising at all. I strictly depend on the existing traffic on the street.
<p>So you provide a service to the people who are already going to be in the area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>I'm curious, have you given any consideration to the left turn that the cars are trying to make? Cars move fast; it's a state route. If there's queueing, there might be visibility issues to the left.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: I think it'll be almost impossible to make a left turn. We were considering a right-turn only, but yeah, that is our intention for mostly right turns.
<p>Would you consider putting some marking or point at which cars would cross the sidewalk? We have been asking for that more frequently from developments. Just a marker for people to look before they cross.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Todorovich: That wouldn't be a big deal at all.
<p>Left turns would certainly increase near misses. Have you considered a small berm? Never mind. Don't want to change the pedestrian access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Have you spoken with BCI and gotten their input regarding this development?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: We had a meeting in February; we had good positive feedback. We'll have another meeting with them. We also met with City Planning.
<p>I should disclose that I'm treasurer for BCI and unofficial secretary but wasn't present at that meeting and didn't see the minutes yet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>The folks at Indovina have done a lot of projects that kind of maximized the use of sites; I'm thinking about the Strip. I'm relatively new to the architectural</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: If a client calls us with a specific project, we propose a design for their project. While I certainly understand the suggestion, it's not really our purview to ask a developer to change. In this case, Steve's specialty is car

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profession, so I'm always curious about client-architect relationship.	washes. That's entirely his decision, but I certainly hear your consideration. Not to speak for Steve, but he's looking at the context of Baum, with the auto dealerships and other similar businesses.
Will there be accessibility to the site if you're not driving a vehicle?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: I'll defer to Steve if there's a need to have pedestrian access to the site. • S. Todorovich: I'm open to it but don't know if there's necessarily a need for it. I do think there will be more space than the site plan shows. We may be able to add some space for a sidewalk on the Chipotle side. • R. Indovina: We do have pedestrian access alongside the vacuum stations. We can potentially provide pedestrian access along the end of the scrim wall or on the side of Chipotle. But certainly, that's a valid point and something for us to consider.
I think it would be great to have access for someone who has mobility challenges and who works here. Do you have air or just vacuums maybe for folks who walk in with bikes? The whole idea of making it accessible is to provide for people who you might not think of using the site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: That's a great thing to consider.
Yeah, Centre one block over is more pedestrian and bike friendly, so likely bicyclists would look for a place to pump their tires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
From what I've gathered, this lot sat vacant for multiple years and there weren't a ton of contenders to build on this lot. If both those things are true, this is great — I'd rather have this as a service that people can take advantage of than have this sit vacant for another three years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Looking at the site on the county GIS map, it's interesting that it said the lot size was 8,000 square feet, but the 'measure' tool says it's closer to 14,000 square feet. Do you know what the site area is?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Indovina: I don't know off the top of my head, but we do have the site survey complete, and we'd just have to look at that. We've definitely crossed the threshold for having to have a stormwater management plan with the City, which is 5,000 square feet.
I think I asked about trash at our last meeting. Are there any other updates on that? People tend to accumulate a lot of trash in their cars. Will you also have recycling available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Indovina: I'd be totally open to adding recycling out there in addition to garbage bins. I think that's a good idea.

Other Notes