

Development Activities Meeting Report (Version: 4/18/2019)

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

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: Donnie's Place site, Herron Avenue	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): PHCA Residents Pittsburghers for Public Transit Development Team: Laurel Communities & Rothschild Doyno Collaborative
Meeting Location: West Penn Recreational Center, 450 30 th Street, Pittsburgh, PA	
Date: 18 November 2019	
Meeting Start Time: 6.30 p.m.	
Applicant: Laurel Communities	Approx. Number of Attendees: 30

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.

<p>Applicant presented examples of previous projects in other Pittsburgh neighborhoods, timeline of meetings already had (DCP, PHCA, DOMI), identified site's zoning as Hillside, identified areas of steep slope, and reviewed previous plans addressing the area. Applicant described proposed 30-townhome development as "Northern Gateway to Polish Hill," discussed location of proposed homes in relation to existing residences; described location of garages and building orientation, circulation around the site, proposed open space, likely work needed to update aged infrastructure including utilities and retaining walls; and suggested pedestrian features (sidewalks, proposed moving crosswalk toward Herron Ave bridge). Applicant has an option on the site.</p> <p>Applicant will be seeking Special Exceptions for single family attached in Hillside Zone. No ZBA date has been scheduled.</p>
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Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
Why would you do attached versus detached homes?	To increase density and improve economics of developing the site. The site is small, under three acres; single-family homes would go on a site larger than 20 acres. Their townhomes include features of detached homes.
How do you count a single family? Number of people?	These are for single households. Generally Laurel Community's products are bought by young couples, empty nesters – very few families with children.
Will there be garages?	Except for a few units, yes.
Why not put a sidewalk on the side of Herron that doesn't have one, down from Harding, so you don't have to cross the street twice if you're coming from the neighborhood?	That's not included as part of the site, they wouldn't own that. What's under their control would be brought up to standard. The topography of that side of the Herron would likely make it expensive to install a sidewalk.
Who owns that area?	Probably the City.

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Would you move the crosswalk or get rid of it?	The existing crosswalk is not accessible (no ramp) and it's after a blind curve – concerns re: getting from the steps to the sidewalk.
Will the walking path be publicly accessible?	Unknown.
“We like parks.”	
Will trees remain?	Yes, they will be under control of the HOA that will own and maintain all the open space.
Concerns about construction's impact on neighboring structures.	Sloped area will be left alone except maybe a few retaining walls that may be unsound. Construction won't impact other structures – they have engineers to ensure construction activities won't impact neighboring residences.
Concerns re: development's impact on rent, creation of an HOA	It's a private property today, the HOA will own it and take care of it. They'll provide connectability to transit.
Neighborhood has an issue with traffic, Herron Avenue backs up and they'll be adding up to 60 cars. Concerns re: safety of street with existing traffic, much less if it's increased.	They had a meeting with DOMI, 30 units / 60 cars isn't considered a large increase. They're not putting curb cuts on Herron Avenue.
There's been nothing on Herron for awhile, now resident is concerned she won't have a back yard anymore.	There won't be a unit directly behind her house on Herron, only green space.
How far will homes be set back off Herron Avenue? Existing homes are filthy, ppl throw things out of cars.	There'll be an 8-ft sidewalk, and the homes will be set back an additional 5 – 8 feet from that. They'll also be elevated a few feet off the sidewalk for privacy.
Utils and infra built in early 1900s – how will construction of site and infra improvements impact area? Timeframe and length of construction? Impact on people on Ruthven?	The townhomes will be staged on-site. Their construction will last about 2 years. They'll upgrade any utilities they are required to, all part of civil engineering work. They'll try to keep street closures to a minimum. Utils may do closures for a couple of days at once. The retaining wall on Ruthven is failing anyway and that will be larger, will likely have to cut 2-lane streets down to 1 to ensure continuous access.
Concerns re: affordable housing and transit. The busway station is right there – what are they doing to encourage transit use and provide for affordability? What is parking ratio?	Can accommodate two cars per unit.
Could they give people who'll commit to being a one-car household a discount? Or offer bike amenities?	Haven't done that before and are not proposing it for this development. To encourage bus use, are improving sidewalks and accessibility to station. Re: Affordability – it's market rate, no subsidies. Anticipated price range is mid-\$300ks to \$400k. They pre-sell units and people will design their homes before they're built. This will not be as high-end as their units in the Strip.

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Any idea of number of people living in the units? Concern that they'll be just empty condos.	Buyers tend to be single people, young married couples, empty nesters – typically not a lot of kids. All of the units they've built in other neighborhoods are occupied.
Will the HOA allow Air BnB?	No
Clarification re: how many units they can close at a time	Three
What have they done to set this development apart from their other projects?	Proposing more classic materials, less contemporary windows than those in the Strip.
Development is right next to Herron Avenue station, you could promote transit and affordability by not having garages and by having smaller homes.	The three units on the first curve of Herron will be smallest, least expensive, no garages. Buyers want townhomes with garages. They hope people will leave their cars at home and use the bus to get into town.
The site is for sale, someone is going to build here and they will be our neighbors. Is there anything they can do to encourage new residents to come be part of the neighborhood?	
Square footage?	On smaller units, 1550-1650 or 1750 ft2. On larger, 1900-2300 ft2.
Basis for zoning Special Exception?	Have to meet standards set in Code.
What happens if you don't get the Special Exception?	Haven't purchased the land yet, it's subject to approvals. Laurel has the option. Single family detached homes are permitted by right and the only thing they could build without a public process A lot of positive things will come out of the development of the site (improvements to road, utilities).
So many different ideas floating around, fi there are things at reach, what could be generated that have positive benefits? What are things that could benefit the rest of the neighborhood?	There's green space on the other side of Herron. Could be a good place to beautify, add signage. Any of those improvements will make the neighborhood more desirable.
Public access to the greenspace would help integrate it into the community.	
You mentioned this is a gateway to Polish Hill. I see it as a wall, a gated neighborhood. Would like to see more variation in building styles, addition of trees. The corner of the property is important. In this design it's abrupt. Way to move the units over and create a greenspace there?	There will be street trees (required). Maybe, they'll look into the greenspace at the corner.
Affordability is a concern of this neighborhood and haven't seen any way this development has moved toward that. Why not? Why not make a design move? Would you consider doing something like that? You could partner with someone.	Affordable housing is subsidized. This is not subsidized. That's not what we do.
You understand this is our number 1 priority and you're ignoring us	I hear you. Our company is not set up for government subsidy.
Re: Busway – people always mention providing bus passes. Can we ask you for things? Will you give neighborhood	We'll go through the process with the City, we'll address connectivity. We're not going to have affordable housing because that's not what we do.

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
residents free bus passes? We're the people who actually use it.	

Other Notes

Major community concerns were lack of affordability, amount of parking provided on-site, and a feeling that the development was not going to be a real part of the neighborhood.

Planner completing report: Andrea Lavin Kossis