

Bloomfield Community Process Forum

To Review the Proposed Development at 4652 Friendship Avenue/Pearl Street

November 9, 2017

6:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Irma Freeman Center

Developer: Gregg Perelman, Founding Partner & CEO, Walnut Capital
Architect: Geoff Campbell, Principal, Director of Operations and Services, Rothschild Doyno Collaborative
Facilitator: Christina Howell, Executive Director, Bloomfield Development Corporation
Notetaker: David Hogan, PULSE Fellow, Business District Coordinator, Bloomfield Development Corporation

Section I: Introduction

Welcome and Ground Rules:

- Christina Howell (Christina):
 - We are here so that the community can learn more about the development proposal and the developers can receive feedback from the community.
 - contact me with further questions and concerns you have after the meeting
 - Review of agenda
 - Ground Rules overview
 - What Happens Next:
 - We will compile the notes, reach out to attendees and clarify comments if necessary
 - The notes and any electronic plans will be made available
 - Bloomfield Development Corporation's Property Development Committee will work with developer to make sure concerns brought up tonight will be addressed
 - Will likely hold a second community meeting to review the changes before the zoning hearing. CH and the Committee take the community's opinion and form a recommendation to the board, which is then voted on in advance of the zoning hearing, Bloomfield Development's Board of Directors will vote to either 1) support, 2) support with conditions, 3) oppose, or 4)take no position for the proposed development
 - Developers will go in front of city zoning board, likely to request variance for 6 units on 1 parcel designated for single-family

Section II: Presentation by Developer, Architect

Gregg Perelman:

- Wanted to come to community first before applying for anything
- The Noodle Factory, a rehabilitation project adjacent to the proposed development site, was Walnut Capital's first venture
- Have spent roughly \$350,000 -\$400,000 to date; by building 6 new townhomes we hope to generate new tax-revenue for the area

Geoff Campbell:

- The Noodle Factory is a success, so leaving that alone; also leaving alone for the most part the parking lot that serves the Noodle Factory apartments
- We are focused on second property (which runs from 4652 Friendship Ave down along Pearl Street to Rosina Way), where there is an old meat market, an old garage, and a residence on the corner.
- Looking at the big picture of how this site fits in with the larger area
 - Pearl Street more residential in nature, more uniform in terms of architecture
 - Have heard concerns about parking, so we're thinking of putting in 2 car garages with curb cuts, take cars of townhouse residences off the street
 - What makes a Bloomfield building?
 - Two-story plane
 - Heaving stoop that goes into the right-of-way
 - Materials are different building to building
 - 3rd floor with slanted roofs, sometimes gables
 - Often awnings
- Site plan:
 - Since Pearl Street is more residential, decided to have new residences front there
 - Disrupts Noodle Factory lot as little as possible, especially with garages in front
 - Residence at corner of Pearl/Rosina Way has side garage off of alley
 - Residence at corner of Friendship/Pearl has rear garage from Noodle Factory lot, greenery added at this corner
 - Green space: likely will seek permit to put planters in right-of-way
 - 3 ft encroachment would be consistent with stoops that are common in the area
- Design:
 - New construction, so will look different from other things out there
 - Roofs meant to blend in
 - With garages, 3 stories a necessity, but kept two story plane with 2nd and 3rd stories
 - Solid base to each building meant to be similar to those that surround it, as are canopies
 - Planters provide a little green
- City would require 2 variances:
 - 1) **density** (6 units on one parcel) and/or **use** (if multi-family)
 - 2) **side setback** for residence on Friendship (not much in code for side setbacks on a busy street)

Section III: Question and Answer

Linda, resident straight across the street on Pearl:

- Is there a timeline?
 - once plans approved, permitting, etc. 6 months construction
 - with zoning, then planning, probably won't start until late spring/summer 2018

Mrs. Shane from Pearl Street:

- clarifies garages
 - folks that park on that side of Pearl Street will lose those street parking spots
- will be taller than other houses

- Geoff: confirms that will be taller, but notes that still under zoning limit of 35 ft

Courtney, resident on Aiken:

- how will it work with 2 car garages?
 - Gregg: two cars stacked one after the other
 - driving force is to get cars off street, that's the bottom line

Resident:

- what similar to?
 - Response: project in Lawrenceville (across from St. Mary's cemetery)
 - those were less contextual to neighborhood
- rent or sell?
 - Gregg: we want to continue to rent, we have been good neighbor with Noodle Factory
 - Gregg: renting would be better for us and for community

Tom from Highland Park, who works in tenant advocacy:

- Concerns about affordability
- any tax abatements?
 - Gregg: no LERTA's here, not the scale where we would need that
 - townhome living is very inexpensive for square footage
 - lots of luxury apartment living; some of which we've done
 - by comparison, townhomes are much more affordable (\$1 or \$1.2 per sq ft?) 1800+ square feet
- Any affordability study?
 - Gregg: getting into affordability on other projects, but not this one

Matt:

- What will rents be: considering selling?
 - \$1900-\$2300 ish a month for rent, does not want to sell

Dan, resident:

- realize parking a big issue, especially with variances
- to Courtney's point:
 - most residents don't have two cars
 - don't want to change spirit around walkability
- appreciate effort to make it look more similar:
 - but worried about affordability; any ways to consider cutting costs?
 - not just want it to be in character visually, but \$2000 too much for almost any Bloomfielder; concerned in big picture with rising housing costs (garners applause)

Henry from Taylor St:

- Concern about side entrance for garage for dumpster:
 - Gregg: moving dumpster from front on friendship to back by Rosina, truck will have to go down alley to pick up trash
 - Another resident: worried about noise from trucks picking up dumpsters
- trash for townhomes themselves:
 - Gregg: curb pickup

Resident:

- worries about losing parking on Pearl with curb-cuts on streets
- parking is one of the biggest problems in Bloomfield
- any way to make more parking in the back?
 - Gregg: not really; can't take away from Noodle Factory

Resident living on S. Millvale:

- renter looking to buy, but can't afford anything around here
- median Bloomfield income \$40,000
- already have many vacant units, but making more vacant units that are well out of price range of Bloomfielders
 - Gregg: from our standpoint, we get a lot of folks from out-of-town who can afford it; make it energetic and exciting to be in this neighborhood, will shop on Liberty etc.
 - also hoping for families; don't want all students
 - feel bullish on folks who working at hospital, who work at tech companies, etc.
 - several commercial vacancies on Walnut st.: nothing is perfect
 - trying to do my part, but this seems like an interesting project that would make corner a more viable corner than it is now

Women in red coat:

- lots of folks in Bloomfield are families, some even have 3 or 4 cars
- affordability:
 - Gregg: Morrow Park at roughly \$2.40 a square foot, this will be much less expensive for more space
- Parking:
 - Gregg: had to have a way to have integral garage to get cars off the street

Women by the door:

- could you clarify which properties you own:
 - Response: shows map, notes again that not touching Noodle Factory
- Could you put two garages side by side (widen curb cuts) to add just a few street parking spots?
 - Response: Yes, that is a possibility
- According to parking authority, could get 3 permits still, so theoretically still cars on street?
 - Christina: as of now don't think you can write any restrictions on that into rental lease
 - Christina brings up parking meeting from a few weeks ago: recertification of zone H coming up, concerns about no longer having paper parking permits

Walt:

- grew up in West Hills; just moved into Bloomfield
- liked walkability of Bloomfield; one of most walkable areas in city
- important to consider this if/when more projects arrive

Roy? Who lives on Friendship:

- Confirms that every parking spot in Noodle Factory lot is already taken up
 - Gregg offers to look into how many cars Noodle Factory folks have, in case some of those residents are also parking on the street
- any way to put garages in back?
 - Response: putting the garage entrances in the back would take spots away from the Noodle Factory lot, and thus some of those cars would end up on the street
- materials and color palette:
 - Geoff:
 - everything is brick and siding except for a few accents
 - brick for building on corner all the way around the side
 - brick on lower floor to break up façade

- hardy plank siding on 2nd and 3rd stories
- will add panels so that not cookie cutter
- not 6 colors but maybe 3

Megan from Pearl St.:

- multi-floor parking lot?
 - Response: city wouldn't go for it

Woman in front row one seat away from aisle seat:

- any way to do a big apartment with parking on ground floor
 - Gregg: then things get more complicated with foundations (not just surface foundations)
- also would have shore up street so that that doesn't cave

Christina:

- we've had lots of questions about parking, so maybe we can target our questions now to other issues as well

Linda from right across:

- just grateful that it's not a bar
- happy that it's residences with families or whoever, not folks who come and go who make things even worse

Fitz from Joliet way:

- hope to rent as long as I can, affordability long-term an issue
- \$1800+ a month is not something that most Pittsburghers can afford
 - heightens disparity between locals and newcomers
- likes idea of fewer curb cuts
- losing green space here
- likes having walkways in between houses, not having that here
- from community perspective: the fewer houses that community members can't afford, the better
 - it's clear that you're trying to use as much space as possible
 - affordability issue is a big problem

Woman in front left corner:

- Also sees lost green space as an issue

Christina:

- required street trees?
- Response: probably 3 required

Women in red coat:

- how many rooms in house?
 - Geoff: first floor: two cars, staircase, utilities
 - on ones without front entrance a small room
 - second floor: living rooms
 - 2-3 bedrooms on upper floors

Jody:

- green space
- stormwater issue
 - Gregg: permeable pavement on sidewalk something we could look at

Nick Chericka: parents on Pearl Street

- variances: biggest concern is density

- 6 houses when now there are only 2
 - Response: our variance will either be for the number of units per square foot or for use (if multi-family)
- any way to do fewer units?
 - Response: spent \$350,000 plus for that lot, so not economically feasible
- cramming lots of extra people/cars
- lot size is 6,000 sq ft.; we have 2 families on 9000 sq ft.
 - Response: currently zoned for 1 unit for 1800 square ft (acorage)
 - Response: purchasing site, etc. lots of flat costs, so to keep it affordable is hard

Woman by door:

- worried if folks have more than one car
- how many people are they allowed to be putting into places?
 - Christina: there are rules regarding the number of unrelated residents per unit, but we have had that problem of landlords over-crowding units on Cedarville. Happy to address those problems outside of the meeting

William:

- timeline to get money back on investment?
 - Gregg: haven't done cost, priced it out, but we're normally we're long term (10 years)
 - a lot of apartments around are getting tax-credits, but we're on our own on this project

Walt:

- actually kind of like dense townhome thing; matches houses in that part of neighborhood
 - Appreciate that it's not just one mansion going in

Resident:

- average income in Bloomfield at \$40,000
- \$80,000 or so needed to afford this: so design not fitting
 - could use cheaper materials
- Are there different models? You're trying to make the most money.
 - Gregg:
 - utility, PWSA, other infrastructure issues; new construction is hard; I prefer renovation but not possible at this lot
 - try to make it affordable but have to have it make sense for the business

Different woman by the door:

- changes are coming, we can't stop it, Bloomfield is behind many of our neighbors
- Would like to see older folks who can sell their homes have some place else in Bloomfield to move into
- Could one apartment have cheaper materials but cost \$1400
- could developer give back to community with parades, events, etc.
 - Gregg: yes, absolutely

Dan B.:

- we have a couple of levers on parking and affordability issues
- seems that you are paying attention to the letter of the law
- Mentions community power in the support or no support of those variances.

Tom from Highland Park:

- average rents \$700-\$800/month in Bloomfield
- realizes costs add up

- is there a possibility that 1 unit out of the 6 could be affordable?
 - Gregg: want quality to be consistent, have to be fair
 - Different Resident: Bloomfield architecture is never consistent

Bruce:

- I also moved to Bloomfield because of walkability, charm
- almost half of Bloomfield doesn't use a car on a daily basis (46%)
- already assuming that folks have 2 cars: if you design for folks that don't have cars, those people will come, if you design for people with lots of cars, they will bring lots of cars
 - Gregg: I'm trying to encourage people not to have cars
 - Bruce: not encourage people to drive less, attract people who drive less
- tangible examples of past developments with driveways that deaden streets
 - eg Fisk and 38th

Christina:

- Wrap up, excuses the developers, encourages everyone to stay to have an open conversation about the development.

Section IV: Community Discussion without Developer & Architect

Christina recaps main issues:

- **parking: 8 street spots being taken away**
- **greenspace removed and not replaced**
- **Density**
- **questions about façade**
- **what does it do to real estate values and real estate taxes; impact of them being rentals not for sale**
- It seems that of these, two central concerns stand out:
 - **sites impact on wider Bloomfield affordability/rental market**
 - **impact on wider parking issues**

Woman by projector:

- Planters in public right-of-way:
 - Response: simply replace right-of-way (3ft) usually taken by stoops
- **Requirement for trees:**
 - **it would be important to see that in the design**

Man seated near aisle:

- two proposed residences closest to Friendship will go over line onto Noodle Factory parcel; may need separate zoning process for that
- **"Laurel Development": needs to be clarified, Christina will get clarification**
- what will lots look like, # of deeds:
 - may split into 6 if they want to sell years down the road
 - in meeting with Christina, seemed more open to selling than in meeting with community

Jody Lincoln, resident (works for Oakland Planning and Development):

- they were very clear that their target audience cares what appliances/materials are, but those shopping for affordability would not

Man with glasses on right side:

- Developer spoke about hospitals, but most healthcare folks who work in these hospitals wouldn't be able to afford this
- whoever's going to live there more likely to be tech company etc.

Andrew McKeon (Bulletin):

- The way that they brought up past developments like the Foundry on multiple occasions shows how they have a brand of top-of-the-line real estate that they like to promote. Consequently, they will probably be sticklers on that because they'll have to push that stuff, market it in future developments - **developing according to brand.**

Christina:

- How do we get a critical mass on issue of affordability, displacement?
 - **BDC planning a larger community meeting in December to convene experts on affordability** and discuss options like community land trust, creating affordable units, etc.
 - get city involved, experts who know how to work within current rules

Wren?:

- even small things, like the type of trees (and birds they'll attract) are worth trying to pin them down on
- if we came together and said we don't want the garages; could we draw line in sand?
 - Christina: It may be hard to get consensus on that because others may draw a line in the sand to have the garages. But yes, possible

Dan Y.:

- why is the goal to make them the most money?

Dan B.:

- Required by zoning to provide at least one parking spot per unit; so if garage, might as well 2 car garage

Dan Y.:

- trade parking variance in exchange for affordability a possibility?

Woman by projector:

- What benefit will this bring to the neighborhood?
 - developers answer: rich people who revitalize neighborhood
 - but will these newcomers really shop in our business district ?
 - Christina: many of these people do already shop where they are comfortable and will not patronize the neighborhood businesses, making the mom and pop shops close.

Bruce:

- **could be other ways to reduce parking (some units with parking, some without)**
- building for folks who can afford multiple cars, high rent
 - don't have to start with marketing to folks with a minimum of 2 cars

Dan B.:

- Biggest issue for me is **privatizing of public parking**
 - exchanging 8 public spots for 12 private spots for wealthy tenants

Councilwoman Deb Gross invited to speak to the room by Christina:

- I'm happy to be a listener here and support what you decide
- A couple of concepts:
 - Not alone with this (different neighborhoods approaching development with different contexts)
 - zoning variances require public input therefore when they say they can't, they really could they've just ruled it out for some reason.

- example in Lawrenceville of parcel with lots of curb cuts, ended up with driveway in back, lost unit to keep density lower, but units kept became more expensive
- At a developments in the Strip, 40ish million dollars are going to car housing that should be going to people housing, so I would like to see changes on zoning requirements for parking

Bruce:

- **Other parking in area includes underutilized lot across the street**

Man with glasses next to Bruce:

- In other places, have double zoned one side of the street, adding meters but allowing residents to park in pay zone

Christina:

- West Penn parking probably not at capacity yet, but may cost some people more than paying for a WP parking permit.

Jody:

- need to come up with ideas
- **taller than other buildings (developer didn't address this)**
- **Could do fewer residences opening up more parking**

Christina:

- Is this group in favor of fewer units or more units?
 - **Group leans towards fewer units**
 - Resident: they can make up the cost by taking away the garages and making the building shorter

Matt:

- No developer enters into a project without having the break even cost and date calculated

Dan B.:

- I don't think we are going to see an affordability win here
 - no tax credit or other mechanism to fix rents available for this project
 - each time new tenant comes in owner can elevate rents
 - I don't know if it's going to get the price down to have crappy countertops and whatnot because they have a brand to maintain

Women by projector:

- does this have to happen or can we put our foot down?

Christina:

- need more public comment before zoning
- another community meeting after developer makes some adjustments will solidify the position Bloomfield Development will take
- regardless of what stance Bloomfield Development takes though, you can go to the zoning hearing to express your concerns, even if you disagree with us (encouraged!)
- that's why we have this community process: you do have power; you can take a statement to zoning and planning hearings, the mass of people in this room do have power.
- zoning requires in person testimony: unofficially can send in writing, but give more weight as to person who is physically there (we know that system deeply flawed)