

Bloomfield Community Process Forum
To Review Demolition Proposed for 366 and 348 Gross St
December 5, 2017
6 - 7:30 pm
West Penn Hospital School of Nursing

West Penn Hospital Representatives (Property Owner):

- Ron Andro, President and Chief Executive Officer
- Robin Zernich, Vice President, Operations and Medical Services
- Mark Kinney, construction director

Facilitators:

- Christina Howell, Executive Director, Bloomfield Development Corporation
- Aggie Brose, Deputy Director, Bloomfield Garfield Corporation

Notetaker:

- David Hogan, Business District Coordinator, PULSE Fellow, Bloomfield Development Corporation

Property Information:

- Address: 366 Gross Street and 348 Gross Street
- Lot and Block: 51-B-36, and 51-B-25
- Lot Size: 40,418 sq. ft. (1.51 acres) and 3,603 sq. ft.
- Zoning: EMI - Educational/Medical Institution (includes all residential properties on hospital side of Gross Street)

Section I: Introduction

Christina Howell:

- A little bit about these meetings:
 - Bloomfield Development Corporation serves to support, promote, and enhance Bloomfield
 - Our work includes Housing Support, Business Support, and Consensus Building and Transparency around new development
 - We are convening this meeting because we, along with Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation, have been asked for letters of support for this demolition, which we will not issue without an open community process.
 - Not only do these meetings help humanize the neighborhood to developers, but the community and consensus and feedback they produce informs our decision whether to support, support with conditions, or oppose the development project.
- Logistics:
 - Hope everyone received copies of the agenda and the project information sheet

- West Penn Representatives will present.
- Their presentation will be followed by a question and answer session.
- Finally, West Penn Representatives will leave the room, and the Facilitators will hold a conversation with attendees.
- We hope to adjourn by 7:45 pm.
- Please take note of the ground rules listed on the back of the agenda.
- Thank you all for coming, and thank you Ron and Aggie for being here.

Section II: Property Owner Presentation

Ron Andro:

- Introduction:
 - Let me know if I should use the microphone with the echo in this room.
 - I'd like to introduce Robin Zernich, Vice President, Operations and Medical Services, who is involved in community affairs, and Mark Kinney, who manages much of our construction.
 - Thank you Christina and Aggie for hosting this meeting.
- Broader Context:
 - The City looks at the Mathilda-Gross St section as EMI--Educational/Medical Institution: that means that they expect hospital and medical care and educational activities, but also community issues such as parking that come from having such a large campus.
 - Every 10 years, we have to have a 10 year plan with a vision that looks as far as 25 years ahead.
 - The hospital is looking to expand, but is also mindful of the community, and is willing to work on some projects--like the lighting in Friendship Parklet--for the benefit of the community.
 - We know about some of the parking concerns in the neighborhood and have had meetings on that issue. The city has been involved in those meetings as well and is aware of the concerns regarding hospital visitors and staff parking in the neighborhood.
 - The discussion tonight will not relate much to the master plan, as we will be looking to hold meetings on that in January.
- Two properties on Gross St.:
 - Location:
 - Daly Building (366 Gross St.) near parking garage and Hospital power plant; fronts on Gross St and backs up to Corday Way:
 - vacant for a few months
 - House (348 Gross St. on other side of parking lot from Daly Building
 - vacant for years and years
 - Will also demolish garage at rear of house on Corday Way
 - Why demolish?
 - mold

- structural issues, deterioration, worried about stuff falling from the building
- \$150,000 a year to keep them standing and heated and all that right now
- no use to hospital; not serving purpose as originally constructed, not being utilized
- looking to take them down for aesthetics and safety reasons
- Post-Demolition Plans:
 - What we intend here for this area is to plan grass and have a big open space on those two parcels.
 - We will have future discussions on how to use the space as we develop our 10 year plan.

Section III: Question and Answer

Melissa Ciccocioppo, who lives across street:

- Question: worried about process of demolition: mold getting into air etc.
 - Response from Mark Kinney:
 - Derelco Corporation a large demolition company in the city of Pittsburgh will be doing the demolition, also hiredtechnologies as well as BLT contracting
 - Would set up in parking lot with excavator and other equipment and attack the building from that angle
 - Air quality:
 - We are worried about air quality as well for our patients, and will be spraying during demolition
 - We will also have people checking the air quality as the demolition proceeds
 - Hope to police process as well as possible
 - Noise and Timeline:
 - Can't promise it'll be quiet unfortunately
 - It will probably take a day to knock it down and time after that to dig, put topsoil down, etc. In total, it will probably take about two weeks maximum for the Daly building section
 - Intention is to minimize impact on current landscaping
 - Days/Hours of Demolition: Monday-Friday from 8am-8pm

Christine Sciallo, Resident of Gross St:

- I've lived on Gross St. since I was a baby
- The house that you're demolishing has been a West Penn building for 20 years; any structural problems are your fault.
- 2 questions: will you stick to 8-8? Will you have to close down street?
 - Response from Ron: You have my word that it'll be 8-8
 - We are successful today because we work in partnership with the community.

- We do not talk a good game; we talk a straight game.
 - The only section of road we will have to shut down is Corday Way.
 - We will not have to shut down Gross St.
- Another Question: If you are planning on putting on parking, when will we find out about it?
 - Response from Ron:
 - There is already parking right next to the Daly building.
 - We will have discussions about our Master Plan and how to expand to this space, but as of now, we have no plans to share related to this space.
 - Today's meeting is simply about taking down two buildings that pose a safety hazard.
 - We have recently been at two parking meetings:
 - The hospital has expanded so quickly, and the downside to that expansion is that hospital visitors and staff are parking in the neighborhood.
 - Adding parking in the space that we are looking at tonight is a possibility, but that may be down the road and is not the focus of this meeting.

Question from man in red: when will the demolition start?

- Response from Ron: We want to start now in winter, as early as this December, when people are inside and not outside having barbeques and the like, so that the demolition is as small a disturbance as possible.

Man in jacket, Resident of Gross St.:

- Question: Will our utilities ever be cut off during the demolition?
 - Response: No
- Question: Will there be more dumpsters on Gross St. as there were when the building was being emptied? Finding a parking spot on Gross St. can be very difficult at times even without the dumpsters there.
 - Response: When the building was being emptied, the surface parking lot next to the Daly Building was still serving hospital employees, so the dumpsters ended up on the street. During the demolition, the surface parking lot will not be used for parking, so the dumpsters can go there and will stay off the street.
 - Ron: I don't want our employees and visitors parking on neighborhood streets, so we will continue to have discussions about that issue. I want you all to know that the Hospital is not happy that employees and visitors are parking on the streets. We are trying to offer incentives to our employees to park in our parking lots and garages and are trying to persuade the city to step up enforcement.

Women in red:

- mom lives in building next to abandoned house

- The air quality on porch her porch is bad right now because the abandoned building lacks windows, has a leak, and the smell from inside comes out of the abandoned house.
- Will you be taking out the hedges that are in front of the abandoned house? They are poorly maintained.
 - Response: Yes, those hedges will be removed.
- No paper passes for visitors: I have to tell the city a full day before I go to visit my parents in order to park.
 - Response from Aggie: we've had discussions on this.
 - A resident of Gross St. named Lauren (last name) is getting signatures and rallying community on this for a post-agenda with the city.
 - Response from Christina:
 - Another concern people have noted is that without the paper passes, citizens can't enforce illegal parkers.
- Hospital employees park for shifts on weekends: if you have someone there at beginning and end of shifts to tell people not to park, that could go a long way.
- Is there any way you could put a fence in in between our property and the lot of the abandoned house from Corday Way to Gross St? There is only a partial fence there now, and as result workers are come in and out of our backyard to cut to the abandoned house.
 - Response: There will be a construction fence there during the demolition, and once it is done there will be a new fence.

Fred Mergner:

- I'd first like to say that I have nothing but good to say about West Penn Hospital as a neighbor. They've been extremely responsive every time I've raised a concern.
- I would have loved to see the Daly Building become senior housing but I understand why it is being demolished.
- Although I understand the parking issue, I myself got rid of my car a few years ago, and I am happy to see grassy space planned at least temporarily on the site.
- Question: I am worried about surface parking expanding and expanding into a sea of asphalt around the hospital that for one thing would radiate heat in the summer. Are there any plans to pave over the site?
 - Response from Ron:
 - We have to figure out parking for the West Penn campus, especially since we have essentially exhausted off-site parking.
 - There are no plans for this to immediately become a surface parking lot.
 - Long term, however, it is against our mission to have our neighbors not be able to park outside their houses, so parking is an issue we will continue to work on.
- Question: Is there anyway there could be a dog park on that grass?
 - Response from Ron: We are absolutely open to that and other ideas for what that space should look like.

Women near back, Resident of Gross St.:

- Question: We are tired of people blocking our garage on Corday Way, often right when my husband needs to leave in the morning to go to work.
 - Response from Ron: we have ticketed and towed people on that alley.
- Question: people continue to park there, so can we do to stop that?
 - Christina: who should be contacted at West Penn when that happens?
 - Robin Zernich: my cell phone is 412-952-9562.
- Question: The concrete on Corday way is a mess, and the more construction vehicles and dumpsters come down there, the worse it will get. Is there anything you all can do to fix it?
 - Response from Ron: The city owns it. That said, we'll try to fill in the potholes with gravel for the time being and after the demolition is done we'll evaluate the alley more broadly.

Melissa:

- Suggestion: community garden on open land
 - Response from Ron: We're open to ideas but come up with a proposal so that we can understand the specifics of what that would look like.

Women in gray:

- Question: Who as of now is parking in the lot next to the Daly building?
 - Response: West Penn leaseholders

Man on side of the room:

- Question: There are barely any trees at all on Gross St., especially compared to Winebiddle. Is there any way more trees could be planted here?
 - Response from Ron:
 - We worked with the city to get more trees planted up and down Millvale and would be open to that here.
 - Come up with where you would like to see them and we'll go from there.

Bruce Chan:

- Question: timeline on 10 year plan?
 - Response from Ron:
 - hire an architecture firm and work with them, others...
 - hold at least 2-3 community meetings possibly around late January through Aggie and Christina
 - architect will be there to answer questions as well
 - try to come up with a vision for what the Hospital could look like down the line
 - hoping to present plan to city in March or April

- Question: will this green space that is currently planned for the site be there in 10 years?
 - Response from Ron:
 - We don't really know at this point. That is why I am a bit hesitant to plant trees, since we don't really know what'll happen on the parcel down the line.
- Question: Instead of individual proposals, can we have a community process to imagine what this land could look like? I don't want to just see unused empty land.
 - Response from Ron: I don't want to stand before you and give you promises that it'll be a park or something.

Christina:

- Question: Will the master plan process be a time when we can talk about temporary uses for that space?
 - Response from Ron:
 - We can have a discussion on ideas for the space during the master plan meetings; but we would be disingenuous if we said that it'll be a grassy area forever.
 - We also have ideas for buildings we currently have that are aging, and there are dynamic things happening on outside of many structures that we need to fix, so this particular space will not be the only discussion point going forward.

Women in red:

- worried about side effects of trees:
 - darker at night: less safe
 - more leaves and maintenance for people who live there
 - Response from Ron: We know we can never be 100% perfect, but there may be some things we can do for safety and lighting.

Melissa:

- Question: curious about house (348 Gross): Why did West Penn buy it but not use it?
 - Response from Ron: I wasn't there at the time, but I imagine that folks were coming from the perspective of the hospital expanding into that area eventually.
 - Christina: At some point in time, that whole side of the block was rezoned to EMI (Educational/Medical Institution), which means that any new buildings would have to fit that designation.

Section IV: Community Discussion

Christina:

- Thank you for being here and for bringing your questions and concerns. This meeting clarified things for me and for Aggie.
- We want to know if there is a consensus for or against the demolition. We do not send letters to the zoning board of our own accord, but instead rely on your input. Our options are to either support the demolition, support it with conditions, oppose it, or take no position.

Fred:

- Could we support it with the condition of a community garden and/or dog park?
 - Christina: That is definitely an option. I do worry a little about what will happen if and when the community garden gets taken away.

Man in back, resident of Gross St:

- parking spots get taken on Sundays and in evening, etc.: how are they going to police that?
 - Aggie: make sure we get your contact so that you can sign on with Lauren, who is also a resident of Gross St. and is organizing neighbors around this issue.
- Resident: I don't see a solution: even if they police Gross St., hospital visitors and employees will park elsewhere in the neighborhood.
 - Christina: The gentleman who was in charge of Zone H recertification for the City left in the middle of process, so they are restarting the process now. Letters regarding Zone H recertification will go out again to residents soon. City Planning has a whole procedure, and I'm still trying to get it right.

Women in grey:

- way buildings are now; they'll become a nuisance if left up
- seems too late to do much

Man in jacket:

- They've had dumpsters moving at 5:30am, and I've heard and seen a welder in the parking garage at 4:30am. They may say 8 to 8, but their vendors often don't respect that.
 - Christina: We have contact info now for Robin, so call her if they start before 8.

Ms. Sciallo:

- worried about what if Ron leaves in a year
- They talk the good talk about putting down cement
- What'll happen is they'll put a parking garage and then those of us on that street will be dealing with that
 - Aggie: Ron is exceptional: worried about Friendship park lighting, called me up and we made it happen; goes and reads at Arsenal School (Ms. Sciallo: that's not where I live)

- Christina: Focus on the phone numbers we wrote down tonight. If they work outside the hours of 8-8, or if there are other things you would like them to follow through on, you now have numbers to call. We will have notes up online and can send them to you as well if you'd wish.

Women in red:

- They already have started on the Donatelli's House (348 Gross)
 - Melissa: There is a light on in there right now and I had never seen a light on in there before.
- It is their property, and they're going to do what they're going to do on it. They don't need our consent.
- That said, this should've been considered ahead of time. This meeting is happening really late in the process.
 - Christina: Unfortunately, this meeting is happening a little late.

Christina: one of conditions should be to secure all exits, entrances, and windows.

Hospital should put in a request to City to repave that alley

Bruce:

- should be intense monitoring when these buildings come down
- can we make healthful, responsible monitoring of buildings being taken down a condition of our approval?