

Bloomfield Community Process Forum

To Review Design of Proposed Hampton Inn at 4520 Penn Ave

February 19, 2018, 6:30 pm - 8 pm

West Penn Hospital School of Nursing Auditorium, 4900 Friendship Avenue

Developer: Michael Kratsas (Michael), CEO, M.P. Kratsas

Facilitator: Christina Howell (Christina), Executive Director, Bloomfield Development Corporation

Notetaker: David Hogan, Business District Coordinator, Bloomfield Development Corporation and PULSE Fellow

Section I: Introduction

Christina:

- Three community meetings were held at the end of 2016 and beginning of 2017; the community consensus was to support the hotel development with conditions. The zoning board approved the hotel to be built, but included the conditions in BDC's letter in the occupancy permit.
- One of those conditions required that the developer receive community comments on the design in advance of their appearance before the City's Contextual Design Advisory Panel (CDAP). Thus, we are here tonight to review the hotel's design, so that Michael can listen to your feedback and see where community stands on the design of the hotel.

Section II: Developer Presentation

Michael:

(Presentation with renderings of hotel available on website at www.bloomfieldnow.org).

- Big Picture:
 - 4 stories: received a small zoning variance on height
 - 1st floor: meeting rooms, lobby, etc, a few rooms on downtown side of hotel
- Front:
 - Materials: brick on first floor, up to third floor in some cases; other than that siding and stucco
 - mix of different materials, different parapits, different heights: help it feel like different buildings and not one big, long building
 - two curb cuts for governors drive, but sidewalk same elevation all the way: all one plane so that pedestrians don't have to walk down and then walk up
 - canopy will hang out a little over pedestrian entrance
- East Side:
 - hotel sticks out slightly from neighboring residence
 - brick detail wraps around building
- West Side:
 - rooms, windows on west end of building help avoid having one big, blank wall
- Rear:

- base of building about 10 ft from Comrie Way; much of main part of building recessed about 30 ft from Comrie
- trellis for folks sitting outside
- parapits raised on roof so that equipment unseen and sound somewhat blocked
- shows rendering of Hilton prototype that corporate is pushing: pushing back, want hotel to be more urban, less cookie-cutter suburban

Section III: Question and Answer

Christina:

- reviewed letter sent to zoning with conditions:
 - windows for pool still frosted? Michael: Yes
 - parapits to shield equipment on roof? Michael: Yes
 - visible public entrance into hotel lobby? Michael: pedestrian entrance will have a small canopy, lighting and signage; will be metallic
 - additional pedestrian signage? Michael: Yes
 - Irrigated landscaping in rear?: Michael: Yes

Resident:

- When will demolition begin?
 - Michael: hoping to begin by the end of the summer

Resident:

- Will traffic on Penn Ave be interrupted?
 - Michael: parking lane might be blocked; no traffic lane will be blocked except maybe very temporarily for steel setting or something like that

Resident:

- Will there be retail included?
 - Michael: No, converted previously planned retail to 3 extra rooms (total room count up from 115 to 118)

Resident:

- Commend you for keeping it looking like Penn Ave, with design giving multi-building look; commend you for pushing against corporate cookie-cutter

Adjacent resident:

- like design
- losing side entrance once built? (Depend on side entrance to have ability to make my house a 2-unit building)
 - Michael: hotel building will go to property line, not past
 - Resident: I believe my house goes to property line; restriction on side space?
 - Christina: 0' setback in this area means that the City wants buildings to be built to property lines and to be right next to each other
 - Christina: we will get more info on this issue for you
- worried about traffic coming out right by my front door?
 - Michael: stop sign at top of driveway, so cars coming out of both garage and governor's driveway will have to stop
 - there will be signage and paint for pedestrians as well

- worried about noise and effects on my building during construction?
 - Michael: there will be noise to a certain point: controlled to certain times (roughly 7-6)
 - Christina: any way it could be 9-6? It's been done elsewhere; perfectly reasonable to ask for certain hours.
 - Michael: **Setting the foundation is the loudest part. Will be augering instead of using piles, so that'll help; the main noise will be the construction equipment. Once shell of building of up noise will be more contained**
- liability if damage? Michael: Yes; insurers will inspect before construction begins.

Another adjacent resident:

- also in favor
- have concerns about little issues; how development process will impact us
- Is there a way to have a channel of communication so that if I get woken up in the middle of the night or if a painting falls off the wall or something, we have somebody to call? It's great to have BDC, City, whoever, but need some sort of immediate contact so that grievances don't foment.
 - Christina: we will publicize construction plan, provide contact info
 - Michael: **developer's contact info will be in construction plan**

Christina:

- signage on side?
 - Michael: didn't put major sign on front because across from cemetery
- blade sign in front a possibility?
 - Michael: may eventually include a blade sign
- Resident: sign on back visible from Bloomfield Bridge?
 - Michael: hoping sign on back will be visible from there (Resident: make it bigger)

Resident:

- like abundance of renderings given in context of surrounding area
- would like to see more corrugated, especially at the top
- could be nice to see it draw from other neighboring buildings: for example, could copy the colorful trims from Children's Hospital

Resident:

- any renderings at night that show lighting?
 - Michael: would like to keep it as bright as possible where it doesn't affect the safety of the neighborhood
- Resident: no lighting plan yet?
 - Michael: have discussed it, but that will come later with electrical
- Resident: would like to see pedestrian lights; also lighting in alley behind
 - **I always like an indirect lighting: where it lights up the building rather than light coming from building and blinding people like Disney world**
- Resident: would like to see less of the stucco that is in the corporate suburban model

Resident:

- average rate for a room for a night?

- average rate for Hampton Inns in Pittsburgh is \$130-140 a night; rates will go up and down according to demand

Resident:

- pedestrian safety/access during construction?
 - Michael: there is a detailed outline for ADA that we have to follow
 - if/when the sidewalk is blocked, there will probably be a protected pathway with a barrier in street

Resident:

- timeline for construction?
 - Michael: 14-16 months
- greenspace plantings in back to stop people from parking illegally? Right now plans just show grass; cars could pull off and park in that space
 - Michael: including a certain amount of trees and plantings is a requirement
 - Christina: add a couple more than city requires?
 - Michael: as long as we don't plant a garden and they drive through it
 - Christina: irrigation plans (stormwater or hose set-up?):
 - Michael: still being discussed, but using rainwater sounds good

Resident:

- What is the process with Hilton corporate?
 - Michael: already have approval from the franchise to put a Hampton here
 - Michael: in phase right now where we are finalizing exterior of building
 - Resident: timeline for this phase? Michael: roughly 3 more weeks
- overflow parking conversation with hospital?
 - Michael: they aren't willing to agree to a contract but recognize that patients will have family members visiting and staying at the hotel
 - Michael: if garage is full at hotel (weekends) will direct or valet people to hospital lot

Resident:

- LEED or any other green practices?
 - Michael: Hilton pushes green practices in particular with lighting
 - Michael: probably won't be fully LEED but what can be done will be done

Adjacent Resident:

- 4546 house that will be torn down has rats. Is there a way to find them a new home after demolition that is not my house?
 - Michael: Before demolition, exterminators will come in and get rid of the rats

Resident:

- no sign on east side of hotel?
 - Michael: chose sign on west side because of hospital
 - Michael: allowed only so much square footage of signage, so if we add signs, they become smaller. But a sign on the east side could be in consideration. More discussion on the signage will come later once the shell of the building is up.

Resident:

- Developers from Pittsburgh? Michael: Yes

Resident:

- Meeting a courtesy for BDC or tool to influence design?
 - Christina: projects over a certain square footage have to go before CDAP, another level of review after zoning. Review was scheduled for end of January, but postponed to allow for comments which will be forwarded in a letter to CDAP.

Resident:

- Comrie rendering: space for dumpster?
 - Michael: recessed in bottom-right corner, actually has doors that will hide it
 - Pickup? Letter to zoning says 12-5pm

Section IV: Community Discussion

Christina:

- We'll be reviewing the notes
- There were things that he spoke about that weren't in the drawings, like awnings.
- With previous plans, Michael said they would have first floor retail, but now there are 3 extra rooms there instead.

Resident:

- no restaurant, just breakfast nook on first floor? What was in previous plans?
 - Christina: used to be a plan for a small coffee shop that would have fronted on Penn Avenue

Resident:

- A number of windows in back of building point towards peoples' back porches and bedrooms. Folks on Comrie Way and Carroll St. will lose privacy. Any way to frost them, or include this concern in notes?
 - Resident: windows in back will be ends of hallways
 - Hallway windows facing towards rear will hopefully be screened in some way.

Resident:

- didn't seem like they have an idea of lighting yet; corporate suburban model super, super bright
 - Christina: lighting plan for CDAP?
 - Demi Kolke, City Planning: CDAP is usually looking at the type of lighting feature more than the shed of light. But because this building is a suburban feature in an urban context, both will be worth discussing.
 - Christina: The two hotels done by this developer in the city are near the stadium and southside works. Both are bright, suburban-style hotels.
 - important to have urban lighting under discussion

Resident:

- Procedural question:
 - still unanswerable questions: better way to go about this meeting process since questions aren't ready to be answered?
 - Christina: this developer came to initial meetings with vague plans and drawings that didn't match what they were saying. Your point is very valid though and is something I've been thinking about.

- Christina: concerns tonight not addressed: irrigation, pedestrian signage/paint, front entrance, signage, lighting, landscape plan

Resident:

- seems like we repeatedly got same answers and renderings with these developers
- folks shouldn't have to go to 6-7 meetings to get answers; maybe developers should have to have things more defined before showing up?
 - Christina: ultimately no accountability from City forcing developers to bring x, y, or z to meetings. working on legislation now that will get more into when developers meet with community, but not the how
 - Christina: We can put in letter that design is vague right now

Resident:

- Put desire for less stucco in letter

Resident:

- traffic study?
 - Christina: saw it earlier; originally had entrance on Comrie, moved to Penn
 - Christina: hopefully right-turn only onto Penn for cars exiting hotel driveway
 - Resident: angled curb cut to force cars to turn right in addition to sign?

Resident:

- HVAC noise at Children's Home farther down Penn was a big issue that never fully made people happy
 - Christina: these folks have committed to screening that equipment, but could ask for more there
 - Children's Home HVAC equipment not on roof (pitched roof) so hopefully here will be less of an issue here since the equipment will be on the roof

Christina wrap-up:

- BDC letter to CDAP will summarize concerns here and be posted on our website