

614 Edmond Community Meeting
March 5, 2018
Taken by Jessica Cook

Presenters: Matt Rosenfeld (developer), Tom Frank (architect)
BDC Staff: Christina Howell and Jessica Cook

Section I: Welcome and Ground Rules

Christina Howell (Christina): Facilitator

- Called the meeting to order and made briefer opening statements than usual, as all of the attendees had been to a community meeting held by BDC before. She highlighted that, despite small number of attendees, the structure of the meeting would remain the same, and asked that all questions be held til the end.
- Pointed out that June of 2017 was the first community meeting held re: 614 Edmond St., and that the developer and a new architect had worked to present a structure that was much more in line with the aesthetic the community wanted.
- Noted that Matt, the developer, asked BDC to host this meeting because we will take a position based on community's opinion of the process, based on consensus, and present that position at the zoning hearing.

Section II: Presentation by Development Team

Matt Rosenfeld (MR): Property Developer, Tom Frank (TF): Architect

- Introduced TF on behalf of Desmone Architects, noted the importance of a new set of eyes on the project to help give the community what they wanted.
- Mentioned three options that Eric Booth, lead architect from Desmone, offered that required **no** variances, and showed shadow study with each option in presentation:
 - Option 1: Single family residence that's 40x14x100, legally allowable but not what MR wants to do
 - Option 2: Two single family homes, both 40x14, two long skinny houses don't match construct of the street, no extremely tall and narrow houses
 - Option 3: 16 ft wide 2 family residence
 - Required variance due to set back
 - Over 14 feet wide, requires variance
 - Approximately 35 feet tall
 - 2 family unit, 4 stories
 - Unit 1: Basement/1st Floor
 - Unit 2: 2nd/3rd floors
 - Requires 2 parking spots
- Showed a variety of angles using renderings from 3D technology Desmone uses that's accurate within 1/16 of an inch
- Requesting 3 variances:
 - Parking in the back. For every one residential unit, you need one parking space. Where the parking's technically allowed to be you could fit one, asking for room for 2.
 - Technically this is a 4 story property. If a basement is used for residential purposes, it's a story. Much of the basement will be protruding above ground. People will be living there so it's a story
 - Width of property, 16 feet wide. Option 1: Build 17 ft wide property, would rather not do that so I don't have to build over 616 who is up to the property line. Option 2: 14 feet wide. Option 3 is variance for 16 feet wide.

Section III: Question and Answer

Audience 1: How will the construction affect people who own their homes?

MR: It will be a nuisance for 9 months approximately. I looked at ways to cut that time frame down. One option was modularly, need trough(?) to bring pieces. State Way is the only option. You'd need a crane-- its too tight, not enough space. Not really an option.

Audience 2: Will there be windows in the basement?

MR: Front, rear there are windows. On the side there is one. It's not on the section in diagrams, along the left side of the home there's an egress window.

A2: So like stairwell?

MR: Yes. The bottom floor to the staircase.

Audience 3: This property is 40 feet high?

MR: No, 35. 35 feet high, 16 feet wide. 48 feet long. 2 decks sticking off rear.

- The first structure was skinner and longer and taller.
- The second structure was 2 feet wider, brought down by 10 feet.
- Final change that was made, Desmone notices that the property could be built to the front property line

Audience 4: As a comment, this looks about as Pittsburgh row house infill as I've ever seen. So it fits right in.

MR: Thank you.

Audience 5: What do you plan to do with this property?

MR: Originally wanted to sell as a two condo cooperative. Open to owner upstairs, renter downstairs. Or to rent.

Ultimately, the fact I could market property 3 different ways gives me a lot of flexibility.

Condos are the first choice, but there was concern, so open to other options.

Audience 6: Still looking at 400,000 for the top floor?

MR: I think the bottom floor would be 350,000, the top 400,000.

Audience 6: What are the other options?

MR: Someone would buy the property, live upstairs, and have the downstairs be a rental. I would help them rent the downstairs, or they could buy the building and find a tenant themselves. This is not a zoning matter, just bringing it up because it was brought up.

Audience: If you own the building, how much would rental be?

MR: Downstairs 2,300/mo, upstairs 2,500-2,600/mo.

- Down: 1195 sq. feet
- Up: 1370 sq. feet

Audience: What's the bedroom bathroom breakdown for each unit?

MR: 3 and 3 for each unit. So 6 bed, 6 bath total

Audience: How much would it cost to rent that if someone wants to rent it?

MR: The downstairs would be 2,200-2,300/mo, upstairs a little more expensive.

A: That's alot.

MR: It's expensive to build new construction like this

Audience: What material will you be using for the exterior?

MR: Hardy board panel, which is much more sturdy than vinyl, that will be majority of the material on there.

Audience: Do you have any experience managing properties?

MR: I've owned rental properties in Philly. Single family houses that I managed myself. I worked for a large management company in college.

Audience: Do you own anything [other property] in Pittsburgh?

MR: No.

Audience: So, with the comparable price, what is going to make someone want to rent from you rather than somewhere like Morrow Park?

MR: The last time I looked at Morrow Park, for 3br they were getting around 3,000/mo...

A: They dropped their pricing recently

MR: Last time we looked it was comparable

- Its new construction
- A free parking spot [whereas with larger development you have to pay additional for the spot]
- A really nice product that's brand new and has equal number of bedrooms to bathrooms

MR: Also, Morrow Park is a little smaller for 3br. Morrow Park is a great building and great place to rent, some people prefer to live in detached building.

Audience: In your current plan, someone would be paying what you're asking to live below ground?

MR: Most rentals I see in Pittsburgh are not 3br and 3 bath, most are 3br with 1, 1.5 bathrooms. (Living below ground) not for everyone, but some people will really like some of the pros that come with this development.

Audience: I think Bloomfield is running about \$1.50/sq foot (for rent pricing). What was that in Philly?

MR: This is brand new construction which is why I think we'll get more. Philly can get 3,4,5/sq foot. Some places just 1.50. Depends on the amenities.

Audience: If people don't want to live below ground, would you drop price of sq. footage down there?

MR: It's brand new construction. With that square footage, I'm not concerned about it's marketability.

Audience: My place is comparable to what you have here, brand new, 2 br, 2 bath. I pay half the price. You want to get more of your money back so you can keep building, but you have to understand where you're building.

MR: That's a great deal. How big is your apartment?

A: 1000 sq. feet.

MR: What you're getting is well below market.

Audience: Can you give me your definition of what market is?

MR: In East End area, brand new buildings are getting 2-3 dollars per square foot. Building costs are about 1.50 per square foot. I have reached out to builders (for options). Building in Pittsburgh is not cheap.

Audience: How will you deal with water runoff into the basement living area?

MR: The builders that I've reached out to that assure there are ways to redirect water with French drain system, I can't speak to because I'm not an expert, but there is a way to waterproof foundation

Audience: How will you handle landscaping?

MR: We don't have a landscaping architect on board. Front will be cemented. Backyard will be grass and then there will be a parking pad

Audience: The grass will be how many feet?

MR: 37, 38, 40 feet of grass.

Audience: No plan to maintain the landscaping/irrigation?

MR: I don't have any plans (other than the grass)

Audience: Any storm water retention plans? LEED certification?

MR: LEED certification is really expensive, but I believe in and (I would like to try). Have been talking with Terra builders, I think that demonstrates my commitment.

A: Just go for proper insulation and not go for LEED, it's a lot of bureaucracy for little reward

TF: A lot of our clients actually would like LEED, but it's 10s of thousands of dollars

Audience: Have you seriously considered a single family home at this site?

MR: From the (get go), I wanted to build a two family residence. To answer your question, it came to mind, I thought about it, but the goal was to build a two unit.

A: Don't you think you'd run into fewer problems with single family? At least fewer variances?

MR: It'd be less problematic, but what I'm proposing looks like a Bloomfield house...and I'm able to do that and still do the two family residence. I just feel strongly that I'm accomplishing this looking like a Bloomfield house and the two-family goal.

Audience: First floor and basement has patio, do they have sole access to backyard?

MR: If I split up two units, the first floor has sole access to backyard. Then it's their responsibility. If first floor only has access to yard, that's (where patios come in.) You walk in from Edmond Street on the front and immediately to the left you have access to unit A and kitchen is in the middle and in the front there's a bedroom, little hallway, bedroom, bathroom and the access to the yard. On the second floor, patio off of bedroom/bathroom. Third floor off the bedroom.

Audience: The material you're using for fencing is kind of see through. For privacy, maybe something less transparent?

MR: Originally we had a hardwood fence, neighbors asked us to put in chain link

A: Is [wood fencing] the brown thing on second floor?

MR: It's something we can use all the way around the decks if that could help the privacy concern.

Audience: Second unit, to get to car, you have to go out the front door to get to your parking spot?

MR: Yes, but its Bloomfield so I'd rather have the spot.

Audience: To put in that parking pad, it will be zoned for an accessory use, then you don't need to go to zoning if you want to put in a garage or build some other structure. When you sell this lot, which you plan to do, they could build something right over that?

[some back and forth while this is explained then confirmed]

Audience: This parking thing is just an invisible line that is just on some software somewhere, even if you had a variance to have one spot, people will try to fit two

MR: Most home are within the 16-17 ft range. A lot of the neighbors are in that range. It's really difficult to build a 14ft house, which is why we're asking for the variance.

Audience: So there is a basement window on the side of the property for the front bedroom and an exit in the back? That walk out is next to the right there are you're walking out the building?

MR: Yes

Section IV: Community Discussion

Audience: So my question I guess that I was formulating-- these two (April and Craig) live directly adjacent, the person living on the left hand side [at 616 Edmond], is he in favor or simply completely bowed out of the process?

Craig: We've been meeting with the developer for 9 months now, it takes up a lot of our time

- Pointed out they are at 612 Edmond

- Person at 616 Edmond has pretty much bowed out because of incentives offered by the builder. They've offered to build him a new garage in exchange (for his compliance with plans). [see last section of these notes for clarification from developer that no agreement is in place]
- It does look good, but that's because we have attended 6 or 7 meetings to get it that way
- He wants to leverage that 20x100 lot to his best ability for profit. If he built up to 616 Edmond, it'd be more construction costs, most strategic moves to maximize square footage.
- Lot sold for \$3,000 and he bought it for \$90,000. It's cheap, but two years ago it wouldn't have been.
- He doesn't have to do this, he wants to do this. Zoning variances are for hardships, the only hardship he'll have is lack of profit.
 - He'll make a case and zoning wouldn't have a problem with it if people weren't opposed, but they are.
- He's asking me to give up (something) about my house to make his two-unit dream

Audience: And half of it is in the basement. Is it even rentable?

Craig: Who would want to spend all that on a condo you have to share? Then we have to deal with an HOA.

- There are a lot of problems with the two unit condo he's proposing, especially as a neighbor, it's the biggest most expensive option.
- Most housing companies won't insure two unit condo
- His pool of people who could buy this place shrinks and shrinks

Christina: I don't think he'll have a problem, condos in this price range have sold quickly in this area.

Craig: I don't have a problem with condos. You better really like the person living above you, any squabble it's just you and them. If they rent, who do they sell to?

Christina: The point you made about the accessory use for the parking pad could make it easier to put an apartment over a garage, but I believe that will require zoning [will check]

April: All of our windows will be shaded out, more so by moving the house closer to ours. The massing towards the back is huge compared to the houses on either side. Where he can't extend the home, he's then extending patios. And you don't talk to your neighbors who are like three stories up.

Christina: Yes I hope that's one of the reason people want to live here, sense of community. It's what Bloomfield is.

Audience: A basement is not considered a story, its a basement.

That's a very common trick, you can build a three story building and put a unit in a basement.

Audience: So, per zoning code if it's a living space its defined as a story. 6-7 feet off the ground, it's considered a story.

Christina: You both (April and Craig) have learned so much about the zoning code since the first community meeting last June when the property was proposed at 5 feet taller and 10 feet longer.

Craig: It's getting closer to something reasonable. He came back to another community meeting with the previous architect.

April: The developer did not fire him until I wrote a letter to the Zoning Committee.

Craig: Once the variances are granted, we don't have a say do we?

Christina: For context, the developer at 5150 Liberty tore down a beautiful, old brick building to build a new brick building with the same amount of units. A lot of the neighbors were up in arms, so zoning denied it, they asked for an appeal, and took it to Court of Common Pleas. The lawyer for the city asked if there was any way to get everyone to

the table for the plea bargain or whatever you want to call it. One of the neighbors had a lawyer. The developer just reached out to ask for another community meeting. So there is some room for negotiation after it goes through zoning.

Craig: But we have two weeks (until the zoning hearing)

Christina: They (developers) have to show legally that they're really dealing with a hardship.

Audience: It doesn't have to be multi unit.

April: The wall next to our house feels gigantic and towering.

Christina: This architect understands zoning and building code much better than the previous one and that's one reason this building fits in better and has reduced its size.

Audience: I forgot to ask where the air conditioning units are

[BDC: confirmed after meeting that one a/c unit is planned for the rear patio, 2nd is planned for one of the decks. Would be amenable to moving them to the roof with some screening)

April: And where are the trash units?

[BDC: confirmed after meeting that two cans will be located on the parking pad in the rear]

Audience: Why couldn't they put the path against 612 Edmond?

Craig: It's more expensive to get closer to Bill's house.

Craig: Most residents living around there are advocating for single family, one car residence, closer to Bill's house.

- The variance he's asking for is to be closer to our house. --Which I would be fine with, if it were closer to the size of my smaller house.

Jodi: I find it hard to believe there won't be a stairwell off the deck to go down to the cars.

Craig: I wouldn't trust Matt to manage the property.

- Complete lack of shoveling sidewalk all winter.
- He didn't have the lawn mowed all summer.

Jodi: Do you have picture of that?

Craig and April: Yes

Jodi: Express that to the zoning board. It's a really powerful thing.

Christina: For the zoning hearing itself, BDC will accept letters from anyone, agree, disagree, and we can hand deliver those letters and I can attach that to the BDC letter.

Craig: A couple more thoughts.

1) Did Matt set up this meeting?

Christina: No. He contacted us a couple of months ago that he'd be ready for another community meeting soon. When he reached out, we set it up.

2) I think it'd be useful and appropriate to find a way to more clearly communicate with the people who are most affected by these issues. I think BDC should reach out directly to neighbors.

3) I think Matt has a relationship with the BDC, and I think it's relevant to let that be known. He volunteers for a market.

Christina: There is no relationship. He has volunteered for the Bloomfield Saturday Market

Craig: But he's not from Bloomfield

Christina: Most of our market volunteers are not from Bloomfield, that's not unusual. Him volunteering for the market in no way affects BDC's decision.

Craig: If we hadn't showed up, it would be a room of people who won't be directly affected. Can people come to these meetings who are not from Bloomfield? Would go to a zoning meeting with people who are not from Bloomfield?

Christina: Yes, these meetings are open to the public for the sake of transparency, we don't exclude people. If there were no residents in the room then we would be door knocking before passing an opinion. We do have protocols in place: we have to flyer within 500 feet, advertise on Facebook and Nextdoor, etc.

Craig: One of our neighbors did not get flyers about this meeting that will be directly affecting them.

Christina: We haven't done a community process for small residential infill development until this one, so we appreciate the feedback. These are great points and I think we need to reassess our process for the smaller infill developments to make sure the outreach is sufficient and that we're hearing from those directly affected. We'll work on that soon, since we have another one coming up in early April.

If neighbors want to talk who weren't here, we can take any feedback via phone or email at any time.

V: Follow Up Communication with Developer

Email from Christina to developer:

And can you confirm that you have an arrangement with the neighbor on the left side to replace his garage in exchange for using that space for construction access/staging?

Reply from developer:

As I mentioned last night Modular construction was considered to reduce disturbance in the neighborhood. I talked to [neighbor] at 616 [Edmond] and said If I can build this project at a factory and have them drop the modules at 614 which would turn a 9-12 month construction into a 2-3 month construction would you be interested? He said yes absolutely. I said the only possible way I might be able to do that is by having a crane come down State way, demolish your garage to help give access to my Lot. If that were to happen, and you were ok with that, we would be able to cut down construction time dramatically and I would build you a brand new garage at no cost. [Neighbor] said he is fine with that. I thought that was a win-win for everyone in the community and it would be an expense I would incur myself.

After reaching out to several modular companies they all said that there is no way to get the modules down State way or Edmond st onto this site regardless if I knock down anyone's garage. So unfortunately I can't build modular for this project, but I tried.

