

February 28, 2018

Attn: William Gregory
Contextual Design Advisory Panel
Department of City Planning
200 Ross Street, Fourth Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15224

Re: 4520 Penn Avenue, Hampton Inn

Dear Mr. Gregory and members of CDAP:

On behalf of Bloomfield Development Corporation (BDC), I write today to convey the community opinion and resolution as voted on by the BDC board of directors on the statements contained in this letter in relation to the planned Hampton Inn at 4520 Penn Avenue.

On February 19, 2018, BDC convened an open and public community meeting attended by more than 33 community members and stakeholders. Michael Kratsas, representing the development team, presented updated plans for the planned Hampton Inn.

In late 2016 and early 2017, three community meetings were held by BDC for review on this property. Significant concerns remained then about the vague design information and inconsistent plans and drawings. BDC board of directors ultimately passed a resolution of support with conditions, which outlined the community's concerns about the design of the building that were not addressed. Those conditions were addressed verbally by the developer during his most recent presentation. Others were not, and most were not visually evident from the drawings presented. Below is a list of items supported and items still causing significant concern.

Support

1. The massing and overall design of the building reflects the urban neighborhood significantly more than the Hilton-approved Hampton Inn design shown during the meeting, a clearly suburban building designed for a car-only culture.
2. The community appreciated the developer's efforts to break up the mass of the building by using different materials, parapets, and heights, and in particular the inclusion of red brick on the first three stories of the building.
3. The garbage area is enclosed within the building.
4. The wall blocking the governor's drive/secondary entrance to the hotel was removed as promised, creating more visibility and transparency into the hotel (condition 8 accepted as part of the zoning board's decision).
5. The parking for the hotel is contained on-site, with the adjacent hospital's parking lot available when on-site parking is full (condition 5 accepted as part of the zoning board's decision).
6. Attendees of the meeting also accepted, and Bloomfield Development is supportive of, the 30-foot setback of guest room windows from Comrie Way; the wrapping of brick around the sides and back of the building, and the inclusion of windows on the west side of the building.

Concerns

1. **Retail/Restaurant:** The ground-floor restaurant/retail space must be maintained. The developer originally presented design for ground-floor retail that has been completely removed from the

plans, replaced with 3 additional hotel rooms. This change creates dead space on an active, vibrant street, and closes off what would have been an open and inviting use. Original support from BDC and the community was based on a development that included a small ground-floor restaurant/retail space. Per the Zoning Board of Adjustment decision on June 15, 2017, “the hotel would not include significant event space, but would contain a small restaurant with limited seating.” BDC fields requests from cafe owners on a weekly basis and would be happy to connect the developer with potential tenants.

2. **Material:** The presented stucco siding material is not contextual to Bloomfield. We would encourage the developer to look at materials used in Children’s Hospital or Penn Mathilda Apartments. Stucco is also not a green building component because it does not have the longevity of most other materials.
3. **Signage:** The community requests and requires a signage plan to be reviewed by the community prior to finalizing. A vague plan for signage was presented, but size of the sign and amount of lighting were details not presented. There was one large sign attached to the top of the building and “hopefully viewable from the Bloomfield Bridge” according to Mr. Kratsas. There was no pedestrian-scale signage near the Penn Avenue-facing front entrance to indicate to someone passing by that they are in front of a hotel.
4. **Main entrance:** As part of the original zoning agreement and demanded by the community, the development is to have an entrance directly on Penn Ave. Having an entrance in any way removed from directly facing Penn Avenue is not contextual to the neighborhood, and not part of the original zoning agreement. Designs did not clearly show a public entrance to the hotel lobby directly on Penn Avenue, instead making it look as though the entrance is angled away from Penn Avenue and partly towards the governor’s drive. Mr. Kratsas indicated vaguely that the entrance “faced Penn” but didn’t say that the entrance was directly on Penn Avenue. He also stated that there would be an awning over this entrance, but none was shown on drawings presented to the community.
5. **Lighting:** An exterior lighting plan is integral to the building design and to the experience of that design by adjacent residents. The community requests to see this lighting plan as soon as possible. External lighting may significantly affect existing residents, some as close as two feet from the hotel. Community members raised concerns over excessive light pollution, or not enough lights in dark, vulnerable areas.
6. **Guest Windows:** Significant concern remains from residents on Comrie Way regarding hotel windows and the loss of privacy looking into the backs of their houses. Residents requested that these windows be frosted or otherwise screened. Windows in the elevations presented were not specified to be frosted or otherwise opaque.
7. **Pool Windows:** Designs did not clearly show pool-area windows as frosted, although Mr. Kratsas verbally agreed to frosting (condition 6 accepted as part of the zoning board’s decision).
8. **HVAC Location/Shielding:** Designs did not clearly show where HVAC system on roof would be located and how the equipment would be shielded from the residents on either side and on Comrie Way (condition 7 accepted as part of the zoning board’s decision). The community demands that HVAC systems be placed closer to the Penn Ave. side of the development, surrounded by a Sound Curtain Barrier to dissipate noise pollution into the neighborhood.
9. **Pedestrian/Driving Infrastructure** The community requests “Right Turn Only” signage at the end of the governor’s drive and small curbs to be added near the street that limit the direction of turning vehicles to right turns only. The addition of zebra striping, or a community approved equal or equivalent high-visibility surface treatment, across the governor’s drive access and right of way and stop signage was verbally confirmed, but was not visible in the presentation to the community (condition 10 accepted as part of the zoning board’s decision).

10. **Landscaping/Stormwater:** A landscaping plan was not presented, nor was a stormwater retention plan or irrigation plan for the landscaping. Landscaped areas, originally discussed and agreed to by the developer, included the rear of the building along Comrie Way, and in the front of the building along Penn Ave. in the form of planters and street trees along the curb.
11. **Comrie Way Landscaping:** 8-foot landscaped rear setback was not shown in plans to community, but was verbally confirmed (condition 11 accepted as part of zoning board's decision). Mr. Kratsas verbally committed during the meeting to fully landscape this area more than the required amount in order to prevent cars from parking in this strip, which currently happens. He also committed to capturing stormwater in order to provide irrigation to this area.
12. **Local Products:** Local products, such as art, glass, and metal railings were requested to be used in all possible parts of the building. Mr. Kratsas said he would try to incorporate local materials in the first set of community meetings, reflected in BDC's zoning letter. No local materials were shown as part of the design, and the community has once again demanded that these be incorporated.
13. **Green Building:** Inclusion of green building materials and practices was brought up by the community as an important part of any new construction in Bloomfield. It is encouraged that the developer follow green practices to capture stormwater to use for irrigation, which the developer committed to verbally during the meeting. The hotel will also follow Green Best Practices as outlined by the California Department of General Services (<https://www.documents.dgs.ca.gov/ofa/travel/greenhotel.pdf>) to the best of their ability. Green Hotels Association standards, whose members include 5 Pennsylvania hotels, include a Holiday Inn Express at the Pittsburgh airport and a Best Western in State College. Sustainable, environmental, and green standards should be applied in the construction (assemblies, flooring materials, insulation, etc.) and operations (linen washing, on-site water treatment, auto-light switches, LED light fixtures, ENERGY STAR appliances, etc.).

While the community is generally supportive of the massing and the use and application of most materials presented, the presentation was vague, as have been presentations in the past. The community was unanimous in its concerns that plans have changed significantly for the first floor use, as well as that again the drawings and details shown in the community meeting did not reflect many of the items under discussion.

BDC expresses appreciation to the CDAP members and the Department of City Planning for opening this process up for community comment. We would be happy to speak further about any items contained in this letter.

Sincerely,



Christina Howell
Executive Director