

## **Community Meeting: Proposed Development 4520 Penn Avenue Notes**

March 23, 2017

6:30-8:30pm

Attendance: 15 attendees

### **Welcome and Introductions- Christina Howell**

### **Overview of Meeting Ground Rules- Christina Howell**

### **Developer Presentation- Michael Kratsas (representing KN Penn LLC)**

Kratsas said that the new hotel design was a response to concerns from the community about garage entrance on Comrie Way as well as the hotel massing right up to the property line and potential traffic from guests going to garage.

Kratsas asked Christina if there were other topics and Christina also mentioned the construction parking plan.

Michael Kratsas gave an overview of the hotel design. He showed slides of the development from different angles which include:

- Overview of the new governor's drive design which now has a ramp that leads down to the parking garage
- Parking garage entrance on Comrie Way has been eliminated
- Property next to 4520 Penn Avenue property has been acquired to allow for the new governor's drive
- The hotel is wider, but it has a larger set back from Comrie Way
- Kratsas said that this helps reduce traffic on Comrie Way
- This design has the same number of parking spaces as before
- Shadow studies have not changed from new design
- Kratsas said that there are no car entrance/exit onto Comrie Way
- Room count was reduced from 115 to 112 rooms
- Retail is now at 1800 sq. ft. and may be reduced more

### **Q&A – Questions from the community to Michael Kratsas.**

Q: Parking on Milgate Street is an issue. Resident was all for this development except for the parking concern on Milgate. Where will staff park?

A: Guests and staff will be using parking internal to the hotel.

Q: What is the rate to park to the garage for guests and employees? Resident is concerned that people will be parking along Milgate and streets surrounding hotel.

A: Price not set yet. Does know that the parking for another of his project's, Holiday Inn Express, is \$15.

Comment: South Side just implemented permit parking until midnight with a shuttle that takes visitors from a parking lot outside of the neighborhood.

Q: Which property did you purchase to expand the hotel's footprint?

A: 4536 Penn Avenue next to the current hotel site at 4520 Penn Avenue.

Q: Will the property abut a surrounding property? Have you spoken with that property owner?

A: Yes, he is aware and attended the Zoning Board meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup>.

Q: Have you completed a traffic study for this revised plan?

A: Yes, zoning has the file.

Christina says that we can send the report out to the community through BDC's website.

Comment: Thank you for moving car entrance on Penn Avenue.

Q: With the new governor's drive what will be the traffic flow. How will pedestrians access the hotel?

A: Cars will enter governor's drive from the west and either exit on the curb cut on the eastern side of the building or go down the garage ramp which is also on the eastern side of the governor's drive. Kratsas said that there was a sidewalk that follows the governor's drive around the corner or walk in the driveway and walk into the lobby.

Q: Will the wall facing Penn Avenue be transparent?

A: Yes, he wanted to have the frontage transparent as possible to make it so that you can see through the hotel.

Q: What is the obstruction for the sidewalk along the governor's drive in the plans?

A: The line in the plans will not be an obstruction and he will ensure that the design is unobstructed from the street to the hotel entrance.

Q: On Comrie Way would you be able to plant or add screening?

A: If there is room for an upright tree that would be ideal. They are looking at adding ivy for the patio to go over the edge.

Q: Are you still planning on using UPMC parking garage as spillover?

A: Yes, hospital is interested in leasing spaces.

Q: Could you use the Hampton Inn in the Strip District for employees to park down in the Strip and use a shuttle to the hotel.

A: In his experience he has not seen guests parking on the surrounding streets of hotels when there is parking provided.

Christina: Ask the developer to remind guests that they need to park in the garage upon check-in.

Comment: Would like to see BDC and hotel developer support Milgate residents in extending permit parking enforcement until midnight.

Christina: Michael and BDC both agree to support to permit parking extension and will work with Councilmember Deb Gross.

Q: What about dumpsters and loading/unloading?

A: Dumpster will be held inside the building in the rear of building on Comrie Way. Loading/unloading will be on Penn Avenue.

Q; Will you be willing to limit when pick up occurs to times that are not a burden/

A: Yes, they are open.

Q: Where will the A/C units be?

A; Not sure exactly where the units will be located, but they will be on the roof probably near the center of the roof. There will be parapets obscuring them from view.

Q: Would it be possible to push the units closer to Penn Avenue?

A; No, since the air units have to be above the vents in the center of the building.

Christina: There are options to reflect noise.

Q: Was there always a pool in the hotel?

A: Yes, but it used to be on the first floor.

Q: Will there be windows to the pool?

A: Yes, there will be windows on the pool on the second floor facing Comrie Way.

Q: For the blank wall on Comrie. Is there an opportunity to have a neighborhood artist to add mural on the back on the building as a way to prevent graffiti?

A: We know how to cover graffiti; we will repaint over graffiti.

Christina: Murals can be a good way to prevent graffiti from happening in the first place.

Comment: Murals are a good way to deter graffiti and add neighborhood buy-in.

A: Not opposed to the idea and had a project in State College that worked with local artists.

Comment: Bride row mural along Penn Avenue is nice.

Everyone agrees.

Comment: There are many opportunities from the arts district that can fit with the neighborhood. Penn/Mathilda apartments by Action Housing collaborated with local artists including the Glass Center.

A: He is open to the idea, but just needs to get agreement from Hampton Inn and City of Pittsburgh.

Q What are you plans for signage?

A: Will be a sign in the front of the building between the entrances to the governor's drive and no plans for signs on the East/West side of the building.

Comment: Discrepancy between the rendering and the plan with the articulation of the wall surface.

Q: When will construction start?

A: September or October if all of the City approvals go through.

Q: What will the front look like to a passerby?

A: From East to west: Driveway and garage exit, window to breakfast area, lobby, admin section and retail on the east most section.

Christina: Have you thought about adding a hotel entrance along the sidewalk?

A: It is possible to add an entrance on Penn Avenue.

Q: Will you have meeting room and event space?

A: No event space, but a couple rooms on the first floor for smaller meetings.

Q; What business do you envision for the first floor?

A: Probably a café that sells sandwiches. Does not see the store being very large with sq. footage of 1,800 at the max and 800 minimum.

Q: Sounds like there is a lot of attention for the first floor so that it easy to access the budding, but there are still unknowns. Is there a way to talk about design input after the zoning variance as next steps with low cost ideas such as adding benches and landscaping?

A: Willing to connect with Christina on progress reports and residents can give input through BDC.

Christina: She has heard concerns around the hotel that this is a suburban design dropped in to an urban area.

A: Disagree with that concern since other Hampton Inns are more box-like. Designs presented today reflect resident concerns.

Comment: Excited about where the project is. It would be better to have a commitment on the design and find cost effective ways to make this hotel part of the project.

Q: What was the draw to this site other than the hospital?

A: Community, there are many nice local restaurants that are a draw. This is a crossroads of Lawrenceville and other communities and Shadyside is well serviced. Hotel will not be relying on the hospital totally.

Comment: Concern about this hotel being abandoned like the printing warehouse between Howley and Milgate Streets.

**Community Conversation-** Michael Kratsas leaves to allow community to speak freely on development.

Christina: Hotel plans seem to be an improvement from the previous designs. There will be more internal reviews including a CDAP to allow further design reviews on the building because of the scale.

Comment: This looks like the Penn/Negley apartments that are being torn down.

Christina: Based on what we heard today it looks like the BDC will be approving with conditions, which are:

- Have a meeting with community group to provide input on design
- Add entrance to hotel from Penn Avenue
- Limit garbage pick-up between noon and 6pm
- Shielding or screening on roof for AC units and reduce noise
- Landscaping/public art to Comrie way wall
- Frosting pool window
- Add local artists' work to building

Comment: Adjacent property owner is happy about the overall project, but sort of sad about the negative effects on his section and would advocate again for the garage pick up restrictions so that they are not at night or too early.

Christina: Is there another variance required from moving garbage from Penn to Comrie Way?

Demi Kolke from City Planning said that she could look into that.

Comment: Adjacent property owner is concerned about the windows for the pool that face his and his immediate neighbors' backyards and windows.

Comment: There could be frosting windows on the rear windows.

Comment: It would be great to emulate Penn Mathilda apartments in this project in all of the local artist design features.

Comment: Cautious to ask developer to have to sign up for many things that he may not have say over since the Hilton/Hampton Inn has final say.

Comment: Potentially frame the conversation by saying that the neighbors want a Hampton Inn that is respecting and reflecting of neighborhood.

Comment: Clarify that the sidewalk wall on plan of first floor will not block sidewalk.

Q: Would there be direct access to the small business?

A: Yes, street access.

Comment: There should be milestone check ins on questions like lighting, signage, A/C where information becomes available by sending updates or follow up meetings.

Demi: There is a City Planning staff review and they will need to provide materials and this could be sent to BDC.

Q: When would the development review happen? Immediately after the Zoning Board approves?

Demi: The developer hasn't applied to City Planning Department and when that happens City Planning will make sure that community comments are brought up. There are internal milestones she will share with BDC. Planning will recommend that this project goes to Community Design Advisory Panel (CDAP) for further design review. CDAP is a panel of 8 people that meet monthly.

Christina: Can the community give testimony?

Demi: Probably not since the meetings are informal, but these CDAP meetings are open to the public.

Christina: Could we send this list of design features to Planning to have as part of the CDAP process?

Demi: Yes.

Comment: Could BDC suggest design meetings?

Christina: Yes, that is something we could add as part of Zoning Board record even if it doesn't fit their scope.

Comment: Could you make the traffic study available?

Christina: Yes.

Comment: Has the council office been part of the conversion?

Emily from Councilwoman Gross's office introduced herself.

Emily: Can check in on the project to see.

Christina: There has been initial conversations with Deb Gross which highlighted concerns a few months ago.

Comment: If we say that we support for the zoning variances, is that the way to get the developer to participate in design meetings?

Christina: Want to use approval with conditions which would ask for the development to meet with the community about the development along with other requests.

Comments: There are many discrepancies on the plan for the building height.

Christina: Hard to tell from these drawings since materials are not shown.

Comment: General displeasure on the responsiveness from the developer in this variance process. Maybe there is a better developer or partner down the road. Does not want to thank the developer to for reaching a quarter of the way in the community's expectations.

Christina: All letters will be posted online.

Meeting adjourned.