

**Bloomfield Community Process Forum**  
**To Review Proposed Development at 4401 Liberty Ave (IGA Shursave)**  
**January 29, 2018, 6:30 pm - 8:20 pm**  
**West Penn Hospital School of Nursing Auditorium, 4900 Friendship Avenue**

*Developer:* Thomas Bost (TB), Vice President of Development, Milhaus  
*Architect:* Jay Silverman (JS), Managing Principal, Dwell Design Studio  
*Traffic Engineer:* Christopher Prisk (CP), Senior Project Manager, Langan  
*Facilitator:* Christina Howell (Christina), Executive Director, Bloomfield Development Corporation  
*Notetaker:* David Hogan, Business District Coordinator, Bloomfield Development Corporation and PULSE Fellow

**Section I: Welcome and Ground Rules**

Christina Howell (Christina): Facilitator

- Distributed 2500 flyers around Bloomfield in advance of meeting
- After this meeting:
  - Bloomfield Development will gather community feedback and developers will review and may alter plans based on community concerns
  - After the community meeting process and before zoning, BDC staff recommends a position to the organization's board of directors, who will then vote. A letter with that position outlined (either support, support with conditions, take no position, or oppose) will be issued to zoning.
  - Residents are welcome to attend the zoning hearing regardless of whether they agree with BDC's position. The developer will have to show the zoning board that they responded to community feedback.
- Reviewed ground rules

**Section II: Presentation by Development Team**

Thomas Bost (TB): Property Developer

- About Milhaus
- Development Team Intros
- Appeal of 4401 Liberty site:
  - Liberty Ave is a main thoroughfare
  - Area is the right demographic for us
  - Bloomfield has a good business district
  - Local amenities for our residents
- **Plan: Build 237 apartment units with a gym, club room, pool, bike storage room, storage lockers, etc.**

Jay Silverman (JS): Architect

*Bloomfield Development note: Architect showed plans for:*

- *1st floor: retail/potential grocery at corner of Main/Howley, leasing office at corner of Ella/Liberty, parking in between and on floor below*
- *2nd-5th floors: rental apartments, courtyard inside with amenities*
- *Entrance/Exit to parking garage on Howley, entrance/exit on Ella, eliminating entrance/exit on Main/Liberty. Adding service entrance for delivery trucks on Howley.*

- Points of emphasis:
  - Convenient grocery store unit with pedestrian and car access that takes advantage of main corner at Liberty Ave and Howley St; leasing office and parking on side of 1st floor by Ella St.
  - Service entrance on Howley designed to reduce train strain on Liberty and Ella
  - Internal residential amenities placed in courtyards to reduce disturbance of neighbors
  - Landscaped buffer of 20 feet against Gangwish and residential properties on Ella
- Design:
  - Plan to use brick and siding materials to stay true to rich context of neighborhood
  - Working with natural slope of site, use different colors to break down the mass of the building
  - Tried to respect transition from commercial to residential area while designing service entrance on Howley

Christopher Prisk (CP): Traffic Engineer

- Currently entrances on Ella, Liberty, and Howley
- Did counts for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic
- Looked at existing traffic that grocery store generates: number of cars, bikes, and pedestrians coming in and out of parking lot
- Then, projected how many cars, bikes, and pedestrians the development would bring
- AM peak hour: new development projected to actually bring less traffic
- PM peak hour: basically a wash
- Internal Capture: residents remaining in the building for groceries and amenities, so proposed traffic may end up being less than our estimates above
- Big change in traffic: cars will no longer be able to enter/exit on Liberty, now will have to enter/exit on Howley and Ella

### Section III: Question and Answer

Audience1: grew up in Bloomfield, live on Ella

- concerns about traffic that'll come through
- concerns about taking away Shursave even just during construction
- but also have major concern about cost of units
  - Arsenal 201: studio, 1 bed, 2 bed
    - \$1030 a month to \$3135
  - Bloomfield, particularly in 15224: 25% below poverty line, \$43,000 median income
  - What are your planned prices and how will you fill the property?

TB: we are a market-rate developer

- affordability is a concern
- We plan to start prices at around \$1000 a month and go up to \$2500
- only way to do affordable housing is tax credits or workforce housing credits
- offering \$100,000 towards a fund for affordable housing units in the neighborhood, not on our site. *BDC note: this meeting was the first time we'd heard of this.*

Audience1:

- how will you address chaos of construction?
- concerned about tearing up the roads, garbage and pest control, traffic of construction for elderly and disabled

TB: in terms of infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, etc.), anything we work on will be better after we touch it

Audience2:

- live 6 feet away from VFW and Shursave
- dealing with adjacent houses from 1900; what is going to happen with them when you bulldoze this?

TB: will work with our contractors to make sure that there is no damage, but if there is, we will be accountable

Audience3: Resident on Carroll Street

- appreciate community, ability to get to grocery store and get my groceries.
- Hopefully, if there is a new store, it can be affordable place for groceries.
- While this is being put in, it will be very difficult for blind and older folks like me to get their groceries.

TB:

- It will be an affordable grocery store.
- complications with grocery store on this site: grocery store with apartments above has not been done in Pittsburgh

Christina: clarifies there is no commitment for any particular grocery store at this time, Thomas confirms.

Audience4: Edmond St Resident

- seconds concerns about grocery store:
  - food desert: other than Shursave, nothing else open after 6pm.
  - transportation and food delivery during construction?
- traffic study: losing a lane? What will that look like?
  - Little Italy Days parking?

Christina: date of traffic study?

CP: we have to do a traffic plan and get road/sidewalk closures reviewed. There will be access even during construction.

Audience5:

- underground parking? Response: Yes
- Gangwish street will remain two-way? TB: Yes
- Howley will remain one way? TB: Yes for now

TB: We are not investigating Howley St as a two-way street at this time, but that is something we may look at down the road.

Audience6:

- People who can afford these units can probably afford more than one car.
- How many spaces are you creating? How many spaces will be reserved for shoppers?
- What about all the traffic that comes off the Bloomfield Bridge?

TB:

- 271 parking spaces for residents and shoppers, enough for every unit to get one
- Could also have a shared parking area off-site.

CB:

- If our development were to generate more trips in and out of the site, then we'd have to do study, but study shown earlier has projected the same amount or fewer trips.
- Developer does not focus on traffic outside of trips generated by development.

JS:

- Retail creates high demand for parking during the day, when residents have low demand for parking.

Audience7:

- I don't live in Bloomfield, but I'm passionate about the issue of affordable units.
- \$100,000 is not enough to create affordable units
- We need to be honest that this is gentrification: what you do raises the rates all around the city and ousts longtime residents.

Audience8: What variance(s) are you requesting?

JS: It is zoned for 45ft in height; we are requesting a variance to build up to 60 ft.

Audience9: Will street parking spots on Ella be taken away?

JS: No.

Audience9: How malleable are design plans? The building design is not really what this community looks like. Is there a possibility of change?

JS: Yes, we welcome community input for making things work.

Audience10: Resident of Lorigan St.

- alluded to the "target demographics" and "rich context" of the neighborhood; could you elaborate on what you mean by that?
- What does this all mean for business incentives, new stores, and retail/grocery?
- Could you speak more to the concept of internal capture?

JS: referring to the vibrant streetscape of Liberty Ave as well as the architecture of the row houses

TB: We didn't include internal capture in our traffic study.

- Looking at a mixed demographic similar to Arsenal 201 in Lawrenceville: young, old, and working professionals

Audience11: IGA employee: What do you care about more? This building or the community?

Audience12:

- terrified about \$1000 shoebox-size apartment sitting vacant in my beautiful community
- Even if somehow we get an affordable grocery store on the site, what will be the size of the new grocery store? We need a large, affordable grocery store.

TB: new store will be between 15,000-20,000 sq.ft.. Right now Shursave is about 23,000 sq.ft.

Audience13:

- Support community's desire for affordable housing, especially for seniors on fixed income.
- Did you have private meetings with BCC and BBN? And is there already an agreement with Kuhns?

TB: Talking but no commitment on a particular grocery store.

Audience13: So the publication that said that there was an agreement with Koons was false? TB: Yes.

Audience14: Resident of Taylor St

- Are you interested in helping the neighborhood solve its drug and homeless problem?

TB: not something we've thought about but yes

Audience15:

- Will there be a grocery store guarantee before you go to zoning and do construction?

TB: The grocery store issue is obviously very important for the community, so we will decide on a grocery store before going to the zoning board.

Audience15: Will that decision be made public?

TB: yes, won't go to zoning without public acknowledgement of grocery store.

Audience16: Resident of Friendship

- Vague, superficial presentation
- photos of units, parking included, price?

- Sometimes developers will use the loophole of adding bicycle parking to reduce car parking, need to address this

TB:

- There are 129 parking spaces on the Shursave lot right now.
- The breakdown of the parking garage is on a shared parking model: some places for residents, some for the grocery, and some flex spaces that can be used for either.
- Apartments' square footage: We are looking at roughly 450 sq.ft. up to about 1100 sq. ft.
- As for utilities being included: don't have that information. Parking will be on a lease-basis.

Audience17:

Question for Christina: When you started this project, were you thinking about this neighborhood?

What have you done for Bloomfield before?

Christina:

- We did a remediation project at corner of Mathilda and Aloe where we cleaned up a vacant lot where people were doing drugs and added a street light and put in barriers and plants.
- reiterate that this is not our project, we are here to host the meeting, collect feedback, and understand what the community wants

Audience18:

- For Milhaus: On your website, you say, "we are innovative, creative and forward thinking."
- This city has amenities; your building doesn't need to add them. Bloomfield is the amenity
- Be innovative forward thinking and immerse yourself in this community.

Christina: Do these amenities then keep people from using the neighborhood?

Audience18: Can you do basic and let neighborhood be the amenity and bring the rate down?

JS: Will look into this and provide the numbers of studios, 1 bedroom, and 2 bed apartments.

Audience19: Friendship Ave. resident

- If you don't get variances, will there be no building? Thomas: need variances to do building
- Issue of height: have you considered the shade your building will produce on neighboring areas? And the impact on folks on Ella St.?

TB: We have looked at shade studies, and included the setback in the rear for that reason.

Audience20: Lawrenceville Resident

- What is the vacancy rate of Arsenal 201?
- section 19 zoning, which is a higher level of regulation than just variances. How will that impact the design?

TB: Arsenal 201 has 36 leases signed out of 101, only available since October

JS: Not submitting for design right now, we'll do that only after receiving zoning variances.

Audience21: Resident of Pearl Street

- With the grocery store, green space, and pool all internal to the building, what will be the impact on this community other than making it expensive for everyone in this room?

TB:

- We may eliminate the pool, since Bloomfield already has one; that's a great idea.
- A suburban-style parking lot is not something you all want; so we will be adding to the streetscape and green space in that way.

Audience22: Resident of S. Millvale

- In Pittsburgh, our neighborhoods are not particularly diverse.
- This looks like a castle for rich, white folks.
- What will you do to actively improve diversity in the area?

TB: We are a market-rate developer.

Audience23: you're at 30% occupancy in Lawrenceville and now you're building more?

Audience24: Resident of Cypress

- Employees of Shursave: what's being done to maintain their employment and help their transition?

TB: Whatever grocery operator goes in will probably hope to retain them, but there'll probably be a 12-13 month gap in between.

#### **Section IV: Community Discussion**

Christina: Show of hands for the following:

- Who is NOT concerned about having a grocery store at this location?
  - 0 hands raised
- Who is NOT concerned about the time the grocery store would be closed during construction?
  - Handful, maybe 6 hands raised.
- Who is NOT concerned about affordability on this site?
  - Handful, maybe 8 hands raised.

Christina: We will clean up these notes and get them out to public. The next step is that we will ask the developers to alter their plans to address the feedback they've received.