

ALLENTOWN CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETING November 9, 2022

MINUTES

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MEMBERS PRESENT:

Christian Brown, Chairman
Damien Brown
Jeff Glazier
Kelli Holzman
Hannah Clark

CITY STAFF PRESENT:

Mark Hartney Deputy Director, CED
Melissa Velez, Zoning Supervisor
Nelson Varughese, Public Works
Brandon Jones, Assistant Planner
Meredith Keller, Historic Preservation Planning Officer
Jesus Sadiua, Senior Planner
David Petrik, City Engineer

OTHERS PRESENT:

David Wilson, UB Development, LLC
Adam Anderson, Site Design Concepts
Ed Baksh, Applicant
John Palumbo, Developer
Joe Fitzpatrick

MINUTES

Minutes of the public meeting of October 11, 2022

Minutes Approved.

EXTENTION REQUEST

902 Union Blvd., requested by UB Development, LLC

David Wilson: This project was conditionally approved in November of 2020. The conditions were to address the final engineering comments, final city staff comments and provide the final security and developers agreement. Engineering and city staff comments have been addressed and final plans were approved in April 2021. Since then, the applicant has bid out the project to contractors and the cost of construction has increased substantially resulting in him needing more time to work out his financing.

Damien Brown: What is driving the April date?

David: Based on the applicant he's getting close to his financing, and he feels that he would be in a better position by then. The main item is that he has to provide the financial security to the city.

Jeff Glazier: Was there a bond posted on this property?

David: They got a building demo permit so the vacant building that was there was demoed but to do any land development beyond that a financial security would have to be posted.

Chris Brown: Was there a Lot Consolidation as part of this proposal?

David: Yes

Chris: Are both parcels owned by the applicant?

Davis: Yes

Chris: And a Lot Consolidation hasn't occurred yet correct?

David: Correct

Chris: I noticed some erosion and some pollution heading south you may want to check out that southern alley and get that stabilized as a condition of the extension. I believe the city will follow up on that though regardless of what we say.

Jeff motions to approve the extension as requested to April 13, 2023
Hannah seconds. Motion is approved.

MAJOR LAND DEVELOPMENT

**114-149 Riverside Dr. and 51-97 N. Front Street, Lehigh Landing 1 & 2, sketch plan, requested by Charles Street Capital
(Withdrawn by request of Engineer-Developer)**

701 N. 19th Street, Popeyes Restaurant w/ Drive-thru, final plan approval, Allentown PA Development, LLC

Adam Anderson: We made an initial submission in the spring and found out that there were some zoning issues and the Traditional Neighborhood Overlay that we were unaware of, so we went back to the drawing board to come up with something more appropriate. The project is located at 701 N 19th Street. It's bound by Tilghman Street on the south and 19th Street on the west. With this proposal we will be tearing down the existing vacant building. The current proposal is the construction of a new Popeye's Restaurant that is about 2,600 Square Feet with a drive through facility. This will be a reverse drive-thru, so we moved the building closer to the maximum set back along Tilghman Steet and N 19th Street. We are proposing more parking than what is required. As far as landscaping we have the necessary amount of street trees and we have included the streetlights around the facility to meet the cities ordinances. Grading is tied into a waiver request that we have today. We have a wall proposed on the northern property line at Buffalo Steet and your ordinance requires that there be a horizontal distance from either the toe or the top of the slope of 5 feet or at least half the height of the excavation or build. Based on our layout that is not practical to meet.

Damien Brown: The lighting should be placed along the curb line. The area between the sidewalk and the curb.

Anderson: Currently there is no grass strip, so we are proposing to put the streetlights behind the sidewalk.

Damien: I believe they should be along the curb line to stay consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

Jeff Glazier: Are you planning on having two-way traffic on Buffalo Street?

Anderson: Our intention is to leave it the way it is, but staff did suggest that we curb it and put a two-way access on to Buffalo Street

David Petrik: The purpose of there being two-way access on Buffalo Street is to provide a secondary access to the site.

Jeff: Is it possible to pull this over 5 to 10 feet closer to 19th Street which will give you the opportunity to make the street wider and alleviate congestion problems.

Anderson: We can look at condensing this site a little bit and bringing it closer to 19th Street, but we would have to talk to PennDOT.

Chris: We need to think about the headlights when turning through the drive-thru. There needs to be a landscape buffer, substantially enough to deal with the headlights. How are you going to deal with deliveries?

Anderson: Popeyes receives deliveries on off-hours so they will pull into the parking lot and unload.

Jeff: How will these delivery trucks enter and exit?

Anderson: We intend on having them enter on Buffalo Street and exiting on 19th Street.

Hannah Clark: If Buffalo Street is going to be considered the entryway that's another reason to consider the additional right of way.

Chris: Providing truck turning movements and a template to show how this is going to work would be appropriate.

Damien: The crosswalks directly adjacent to the two sides of this property could be improved.

Hannah: I would like to ask the applicant about their openness in adding a Lanta bus shelter. I would assume that some workers would be taking Lanta to get back and forth to work.

Anderson: Yes, we can take a look at that.

Damien: An outside dining space would add to the appeal of the restaurant.

Chris: The West End Theater District is centered around the Civic Theatre, and I think you could take some cues from that building in terms of the vertical details and how it's broken up to scale, which might be able to be applied to this concept. I wonder if there can be some landscaping along the northern side of the property line to soften up the facade

Anderson: We can find something that will survive along that wall.

Jeff motions to table. Kelli Seconds. Motion to table is approved.

REZONING

Draft Legislative Bill from Urban Residential Properties proposing to:

- a. Re-zone Tax Parcels 640744791819 and 640744789158 located along Riverside Drive between W. Liberty and W. Allen Streets from I-3 to B-5; and**
- b. Amend the City of Allentown Zoning Ordinance to allow area and yard requirements applied in the B2 district (Central Business District) be applied in certain parcels zoned B5 (Urban Commercial) by Riverfront area.**

Joe Fitzpatrick: This is an extension of other B5 zoning that has occurred in the last year and a half. We are looking specifically at the property along Riverside Drive between Allen and Liberty which it is contiguous to and across the street from other zoned B5 areas. We are requesting that the marked parcels identified as I3 be changed to B5.

We're looking to allow B2 zoning criteria in certain particulars to be applied to this narrow geographic area.

John Palumbo: The site that we are proposing to add in the B5 district is on the Riverside Drive corridor and adjacent to the backside of the Neuweiler Brewery. This is currently a blighted area in need of urban redevelopment, and we think this is a natural and logical extension to what was already previously proposed and approved by the Planning Commission.

When the initial ordinance was introduced, there was a map amendment for B5 as well as a text amendment for MFD for multi-family residential use only. You need to have 24,000 square feet; you need to do a 5 / 2 mixed-use residential and in that case, you can go up 80 feet or seven stories and your lot coverage is 90%. However since MFD is only a use within the ordinance this does not apply to any other uses besides multi-family residential within the area. We are proposing this amendment to provide us with the flexibility needed that if there was an opportunity to have a different type of use in the area other than multi-family residential, we would have that flexibility.

Hannah: What is the vision of this area under the new zoning ordinance?

Mark: We talked about a modified RRO. I wouldn't say that what's existing in the RRO is what we have envisioned down here. We wanted to maintain the vision of the Waterfront which is open, inviting and green and with the maximum building coverage of 100% we thought that would be in conflict of what the overall vision of the waterfront should be. We wanted to keep the continuity of the RRO to the north by creating that setback along the river so it can be open to the public. As we go through the rezoning, we expect it to be close to the modified RRO that we are discussing but the timing is not expected to be a quick process.

Hannah: I think that there are arguments to be made that some of the components of B2, if applied, would be beneficial to other B5 areas such as the Theater District.

Mark: The thought was, we have projects that are looking to come up now and we would like to see the Waterfront area master planned as opposed to individual parcels coming.

Damien: What elements of B2 are being considered to be applied to this area?

John: The applicable section that is being proposed, amended from B2 is section 1315.03. Parcels which are adjacent to or east of Riverside Drive shall have B2 requirements for minimum lot area, minimum lot width, front yard, rear yard, width of the side yard, maximum height and maximum percentage of building coverage.

Damien: Is this essentially changing it to B2?

Mark: The biggest difference is the maximum percentage of building coverage. We felt that it was important to put some sort of buffer in there between residential buildings. Where we have our disagreement is the parcels west of Riverside Drive that abut the neighborhood. This is where we are concerned there might be conflicts of tall buildings next to the neighborhood so we would like to see more of a buffer.

Jeff: I would have to say I am in favor of moving ahead as written.

Damien: I lean towards favorable recommendation to city council.

Hannah: I second Damien's favorable recommendation.

Chris: I am in support of the proposal east of Riverside Drive, in terms of the overlay. I am for the application of the B2 site design criteria, and I am in favor of the I3 to B5 rezone as proposed. The B5 properties on the west side of Riverside Drive are appropriately zoned for the transition that they serve.

Kelli: I am inclined to endorse the staff report.

Jesse: For clarification, if you pass anything you will have legalized that kind of building style so the next time they come back, their designs will be made compliant based on what we are doing now.

Chris: Just as an advisory reminder we are making a recommendation to City Council, so it doesn't stop here.

Chris: We are going to ask staff to forward the individual recommendations of the commissioners to counsel and I don't think a formal motion or action is required.

ADJOURN

DRAFT