

Cedar Park Neighbors March Zoning Committee Meeting Report **Tuesday, March 15, 2022**

Return visit from applicant for 4820 Chester Avenue

The project as proposed is a 3-story apartment building, with 12 units, in a mix of one and two-bedroom configurations. The developer was part of a team that had proposed a 16-unit building in 2018, which was met with many objections and concerns. This proposal is from only one member of that prior development team.

Please see the revised proposal materials **here**. The variances requested remain the same - dimensional variances requested are for front yard setback and site coverage, and use variances are for multi-family use and parking. Changes to the project are minimal – window boxes originally shown at all windows are now proposed for the first floor only, for easier maintenance. A roof and steps were added to enhance the entrance to the building. A more robust trash enclosure was proposed.

Many of the neighbors attending this meeting had also attended the January meeting, where this project was initially presented. As there were no significant changes to the design or massing of the building, most of the discussion revolved around the affordability of the units. While control of unit pricing and affordability is not within the purview of the zoning board, it is of great concern to the community, and as zoning relief is being sought by the applicant, some relief is likewise sought by the community as it accepts the burden of this increased density.

Current comparable market-rate rents for apartments in the neighborhood range from \$1100 - \$1500 for a one-bedroom, and \$1500 - \$1900 for a two bedroom. These are consistent with what the applicant would charge if this building were completed today. He proposed providing two units affordable to people earning 50% of the area median income (AMI), which would put those units at \$886 for a one-bedroom, and \$1,063 for a two bedroom in today's dollars. A neighbor pointed out that targeting affordability at 40% AMI is more realistic for the neighborhood, based on Councilperson Gauthier's recent affordability study; the applicant agreed to target the two affordable units at 40% AMI.

(The applicant did point out that, by the time this building is completed in 2-3 years, the market may be very different, and AMI will change, so these numbers are to be taken in context. He also mentioned that the current volatility of the construction materials market makes these kinds of predictions more difficult than usual.)

The question of whether or not the applicant would accept housing choice vouchers was raised. He stated that his lender has grouped several of his properties together under a single mortgage, so pulling one out to comply with the requirements of the housing choice program is prohibitively difficult.

The trash enclosure construction and location was discussed; the nearest neighbors are very concerned about trash management, and the applicant will work with them to make sure the solution is acceptable to them, as well as to the larger community.

There are several lovely mature trees on the site; one in particular is a large London Plane tree at the rear of the site, which should be preserved. The applicant agreed to preserve this tree, and also will be required by the Fairmount Park Commission to include several new street trees as part of the construction permitting process.

After discussion, it was decided to take a vote to see if there was general support, or general opposition, to the project. The support was based on the assumptions in the discussion above – primarily, that 2 affordable units at 40% AMI would be included. It was agreed that, if there was a general expression of support, members of the CPN zoning committee would continue to work with the applicant to find a way to create a binding agreement, satisfactory to both parties, to guarantee the affordability component.

A vote was taken; there were ten (10) votes in support, provided an agreement on affordability can be reached, and one (1) vote in support regardless, for a total of eleven (11); three (3) votes in opposition; and five (5) abstaining/no opinion. CPN will continue to work with the applicant, with the goal of cementing the

affordability via deed restriction, covenant, or some other mutually agreeable guarantee. Max Weiss, from Councilwoman Gauthier's office, offered to help the applicant explore funding and other options.

Additional zoning news:

The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) hearing for the 5000 Warrington project was held on Tuesday, March 18, 2022. The ZBA voted to grant the requested use variance. Please see the letter of support from Cedar Park Neighbors **here**. For those who might be interested in hearing the deliberations of the ZBA on this project, you can find recordings of those meetings at this link: <https://www.phila.gov/departments/zoning-board-of-adjustment/public-meetings/>

The CPN zoning committee is beginning to discuss whether or not we should go back to meeting in person; continue meeting on Zoom; or do some hybrid of the two. Please feel free to email us at zoning@cedarparkneighbors.org with any thoughts you may have on that issue.

CPN's next zoning meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 19th at 7:00 pm; we will send out a Zoom link closer to that date. In the meantime, if anyone has questions, about this or other zoning issues, please feel free to email us at zoning@cedarparkneighbors.org.