
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: July 25, 2024 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham, Inc.

Attendance:

Frank Arena	David Estep	Christina Hartlieb	Bobby Minelli
Cierra Bickel	Jermella Figgs	Richard Hordinski	Megan Neiheisel
Heather Britt	Kathryne Gardette	Peter Koenig	Michael Rountree
Gary Dangel	Lexie Grimes	Lynn Love	Alex Zyndorf
Chris Davis	Paul Haffner	Samantha Miller	

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Kathryne Gardette at 9:07 AM.

Minutes from the June 27, 2024 meeting were approved by Samantha Miller 1st, Paul Haffner 2nd.

Treasurer's Report – Samantha reported on behalf of Alex, who had to leave early. We still need to raise approximately \$1,300 to pay for the remaining balance on flower pots. Paul asked whether Lighthouse is a currently paid member; Alex can look into it, and noted that there is a need to reconcile PayPal payments that have been made.

Discussion Topics:

Kathryne prompted discussion by asking for news of something good that had happened in the past month. Christina said that the Harriet Beecher Stowe House is now open, with displays both from 1840 and 1940, when it served as the Edgemont Inn. Paul noted that Lighthouse Youth Services was recently spotlighted in a Cincinnati Herald article. Lynn said that Market Wines has had its soft open and will be having its grand opening on that Friday, with a ribbon cutting. Featured artwork will rotate occasionally, as will the featured on-tap beer(s). Alex said that there have been some residents moving in already at Peebles apartments, and there will be a ribbon cutting for Paramount Launch on August 9th. Cierra mentioned the hotel's marketing efforts during the summer olympics. Lexi said that Mortar will be ready to open in one more month. Heather said that DanceFix should be opening in the first week of August. Jermella noted that the changes happening throughout the neighborhood have been a long time coming. Chris said that the live mural at the former florist building is doing great.

CNBDU Funding – Samantha Miller

We were awarded the NDBIP grant that we sought, to fund a small business improvements program that will be managed by the WHRF.

Transportation & Planning – (discussion)

Kathryne said that there will be two presentations to be discussed during an online meeting next week (Thursday 6:30 PM), seeking our support. One is a proposed 200+ dwelling unit building at the location of the former Dairy Mart, and the other is a hotel on Beecher. The hotel proposal was not represented in this WHBG meeting, but the apartment building was represented by attorney Peter Koenig who gave a presentation and issued a handout. A similar presentation was made to WHAC in June.

The proposed development will be for 244 dwelling units, on the location of the former Dairy Mart (near McDonalds), with a lot size of 1.43 acres. Zoning variances will be required for certain dimensional issues. This design is an updated one from that which was presented in 2020, adding a floor to go from 174 to 244 units, which will be market-rate

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workforce housing. Estimated budget will be \$50 million. The building will include 215,000 s.f. and 133 parking spaces, and the building will conform to zoning transect requirements. The main entry will be on the corner, and the facade forms and materials are intended to pay homage to the neighborhood. First floor space will have a storefront appearance, but there will not be any retail tenant space.

Peter said that the investment will be a benefit to the neighborhood, though it was noted that the architect is out of Columbus (no contractor has yet been selected). They hope to be able to break ground in January. Peter said that there is a similar cost project that recently opened at McMillan and Ohio. The new building will activate the street corner, create needed housing with good proximity to jobs, and bring customers for a new grocery store. Peter said the project is in keeping with the WHRF's redevelopment plan and with Cincinnati Planning & Zoning.

Kathryne recalled that the prior proposal in 2019 did not gain our support. When presented to WHAC in June, there was concern regarding the increased number of dwelling units. Peter was asked whether this project will do any VTICA funding, and whether there will be any hiring of local contractors or labor; he said he may be able to answer during the Thursday night meeting. Chris noted that there was a similar-sized project called Woodburn Exchange that included significant funding contribution towards the East Walnut Hills Assembly. Samantha explained that VTICA (Voluntary Tax Incentive Contribution Agreement) is a form of tax abatement that directs about 7.5% to funding neighborhood improvements or organizations.

Questions were raised regarding who would live there; Peter said that a target demographic would be those with incomes in the range of \$57k to \$62k. Samantha said that she has heard some of the units be described as micro units, and asked whether research had been done to determine the mix of unit sizes. Peter said he would address these in the upcoming meeting.

Questions were also raised about parking, as the proposal only includes 133 plus 71 bike spaces. Gary asked about the design of a nearby garage, but that is a separate project with no connection. Samantha suggested an option on the Alms garage. Michael asked for clarification regarding the variances that will be requested, and Peter agreed to address this in the upcoming evening presentation.

Lexie asked if there was any room for retail on the first floor, but Peter said it will only look like retail. Instead, there will be amenities such as a clubhouse, gym, and community rooms on the first floor. Hallmark Communities will be the developer as well as the building manager.

Other Matters:

None.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:05 AM.