
Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group

Minutes

Minutes: August 22, 2024 - Walnut Hills Area Council: Business Group Meeting

Taken by Michael Rountree, Childress & Cunningham Architects

Attendance:

Frank Arena	Bill Evans	Peter Koenig	Kim Satzger
Trent Arthur	Kathryne Gardette	Lynn Love	Josh Smitherman
Cierra Bickel	Lexie Grimes	Samantha Miller	Alex Zyndorf
Heather Britt	Christina Hartlieb	Bobby Minelli	
Nick Dorizas	Esco Jackson	Michael Rountree	

Opening:

Meeting called to order by Kathryne Gardette at 9:12 AM. Each person was asked to share something positive that had happened in the previous month.

Minutes from the July 25, 2024 meeting were approved by Christina Hartlieb 1st, Alex Zyndorf 2nd.

Treasurer's Report – Alex reported that we have approximately \$3,600 in the main account, and \$1,300 in a second account. To make payment on the neighborhood flower pots, the WHAC loaned some money, which should be reimbursed later once CNBDU funding for the current year is approved. Alex said that the bank accounts are still in Samir's name, regarding online access, so she is working to get that changed. Treasurer's Report was approved, Cierra Bickel 1st, Bobby Minelli 2nd.

Discussion Topics:

Alex Zyndorf gave an update of some of the Model Group buildings. At Paramount Launch, there are two available retail tenant spaces (middle and at street corner). When ArtWorks moves into its new location, the space it currently has on Peebles Corner will be split into two suites, and Model Group is looking for the right kind of tenant to occupy that prime position. Alex said they favor services rather than retail, and that the corner needs an active space.

Kathryne spoke about the median strip plantings along Gilbert, which began as a neighborhood project. The initial design was for “zeroscaping” but the actual plantings were different, requiring maintenance costs of \$5k to \$10k per year. Kathryne also noted that the City's “Connected Communities” as well as other initiatives will have an impact on Walnut Hills. Alex suggested that we should ask Keep Cincinnati Beautiful to speak to us.

Kathryne also mentioned the proposed extension of the streetcar route, which should come through Walnut Hills. Samantha noted that the advocacy group did not expressly call for a route up along Gilbert, but rather focused on an east-west connection.

Request for Letter of Support – (discussion)

Attorney Peter Koenig gave a second revised presentation and requested a letter of support for a new apartment building. A similar presentation was made to WHBG in July, so that members would be prepared to vote in August. One question raised in July was about the inclusion of “micro” units; Peter said that the term has a vague definition and really only applies to situations found in high density cities. Alex said that Model Group uses the term “efficiency” to refer to units that are less than 400 sf. And with rent less than \$1,000 per month.

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

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one from that which was presented in 2020, adding a floor to go from 174 to 244 units, which will be market-rate 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. First floor space will have a storefront appearance, but there will not be any retail tenant space.

One change to the design from the July presentation was to add a side entrance along Park Avenue. The main entrance is still at the corner on McMillan, and the facade features articulation to adhere to the form-based-code. The units will not be luxury but rather workforce housing, at market rates. Both the architect and the developer Hallmark Communities are out of Columbus, and Hallmark Communities will be the on-site manager.

Regarding parking, one of the sought zoning variances is for 8 fewer parking spaces, as 133 is the most the design could fit. Peter said that with Connected Communities, the City is trying to push away from requiring parking, with an emphasis on supporting other means of transportation as well as walkability. Peter also clarified that the requested letter of support would not be for zoning variance requests, but rather just for the project in general.

Lexie asked whether they will enter into any form of tax or VTICA arrangement, and Samantha gave some explanation of how a VTICA arrangement can function.

Kathryne reported that WHAC did not vote in favor of this proposal (nor another hotel proposal). A motion to issue a letter of support was made by Josh Smitherman 1st, Alex Zyndorf 2nd, but this motion was denied. With a vote total of 5 for, 3 against, and 3 abstentions, the majority threshold was not reached. In light of this vote, Peter requested that individual businesses or persons could provide him with their own letter of support.

Other Matters:

Kathryne said that next month's meeting will be about Connected Communities, and the Gilbert and Reading Road corridors.

Next month's meeting location has not been determined, and should be announced in the upcoming meeting reminder email.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 10:10 AM.