

Firchow, Kevin

From: Zellers, Ledell
Sent: Friday, June 01, 2018 9:40 AM
To: Firchow, Kevin; Stouder, Heather
Subject: Houden E. Johnson Street proposal

Hello Kevin and Heather,

I've had massive problems with WiFi....so hope this makes it to you. Please confirm and please share with Plan Commissioners. Thank you!

Dear Fellow Plan Commissioners

I regret not being able to be with you as you consider the Houden development proposal for the 700 block of E. Johnson Street.

This has been a long and difficult process. As you know there have been many development proposals in the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood (TLN) that have come before you in the last several years (e.g. Stone House-E Washington; McGrath-E Washington, Wall-E Mifflin, Matty-E. Johnson/Blount; two Gebhardt-E Washington/Livingston and E. Washington/Patterson). These developments have added approximately 1000 units, a 50% increase in the number of units in the neighborhood.

All of these proposals have been supported by the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association (TLNA) and by me. Some took a number of meetings with me and with the neighborhood to come to a place where the development proposals were sufficiently in harmony with the neighborhood plan and other standards/parameters to garner support...but all got to that point and were passed by the Plan Commission on the consent agenda or if not on the consent agenda, they were passed with relatively little discussion.

The Houden development proposal, unfortunately, has not reached the point where the neighborhood, the developer and I are in agreement about the proposal. There have been many many meetings in an effort to get to a point where the neighborhood and I could support this development proposal. Part of the reason the excessive number of meetings was needed was the starting point for this proposal. The original proposal was significantly out of scale for the site and quite inconsistent with the neighborhood plan. It has

incrementally improved. I do appreciate that a number of changes have been made. It does, however, make the process more difficult when the proposal starts at a such a distance from what would be acceptable.

The TLN is clearly a neighborhood that is accepting of change, a neighborhood that has embraced greater density, a neighborhood that has supported ordinance changes to have even greater building height and density...in the right places. They spent a lot of time working on their neighborhood plan and have revisited it periodically to be sure it still makes sense and is harmony with the goal of supporting both a strong neighborhood and supporting appropriate developments. The TLNA has even made a change to the neighborhood plan to allow for increased development intensity when circumstances pointed to this as appropriate for the neighborhood and city.

The TLNA does not lightly object to a development proposal. When they do I listen carefully and respect their analysis and perspective. I hope the Plan Commission will also.

The current proposal is improved from the initial proposal. I appreciate that the developer has made progress. I am particularly pleased that the proposal is now essentially at a 3 story height (although not technically meeting the definition for three stories) since the neighborhood plan calls for three stories in this location. This change from four stories to the 3 story height was made quite recently. This change was necessary for me to consider supporting this project and I appreciate that the developers have a proposal that is now at the 3 story height. I also appreciate their indicated intent to rehab 7 houses which have been suffering from "deferred maintenance".

That said, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that I cannot support this project proposal. I simply do not believe it meets the standards for approval.

Demolition Standards

In order to approve a demolition, the Plan Commission must find that both the requested demolition or removal and the proposed use are compatible with the purpose of the demolition section. I cannot find that the requested demolitions/removals are compatible with the purpose of the demolition ordinance which states its purpose "is to aid in the implementation of adopted

City plans, protect neighborhood character, preserve historic buildings, encourage the reuse and/or relocation of existing buildings, discourage buildings falling into a state of severe disrepair from lack of maintenance by the owner...”.

The proposed demolitions frustrate the purpose of the demolition ordinance by dramatically altering the neighborhood character of this block by demolishing four houses and moving 3 houses.

The Landmarks Commission recognized that demolition of these homes would result in loss of “neighborhood cohesion” which is clearly counter to the ordinance’s purpose of protecting neighborhood character.

In addition, the proposed use (not just the demolitions themselves) must be compatible with the purpose of the demolition section. The neighborhood mixed use definition states that the scale of neighborhood mixed-use buildings will generally be “small” when the adjacent neighborhood is low or medium density. The proposed development is over 300 feet in length which is significantly larger than any other mixed use building in the area, both historic buildings and the new mixed use building to the west which is now being built. As a result, the proposed building cannot be considered “small”. In addition, when looking at the depth of the building as well as the length, the proposed development is considerably deeper than buildings in the area, including the new mixed use development to the west which is only 65 feet in depth compared to this proposed development which is 100 feet in depth. This proposed development is simply not “small” as called for in the neighborhood mixed use definition. As a result, it is contrary to the purpose of the demolition ordinance which calls for protecting neighborhood character.

Conditional Use Standard 4

Again, I point to the neighborhood mixed use definition which states that the scale of neighborhood mixed-use buildings will generally be “small” when the adjacent neighborhood is low or medium density. As noted above, the proposed building is clearly not small. The long term goal of the neighborhood plan for mixed use on the 700 block of E Johnson street could be achieved through adaptive reuse of some of the buildings on that block (as has happened

on the 800 block of E Johnson) and/or with smaller scale developments. The commercial district on the 700, 800 and 900 blocks of E Johnson street is an important character defining feature of the neighborhood. A development of the scale of this proposal (300 feet long) would significantly impact the normal and orderly development of the street and would result in proposals for additional out-of-scale developments that would be counter to the neighborhood mixed use definition calling for small mixed use buildings when the adjacent neighborhood is low or medium density.

Because this development proposal does not meet the standards for demolition as described above and because it does not meet conditional use standard 4, I ask that you not approve this project proposal.

Best,

Ledell

Alder Ledell Zellers
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