

Development Activities Meeting Report (Version: 01/24/2024)

This report created by the Neighborhood Planner and included with staff reports to City Boards and/or Commissions.

Logistics	
Project Name/Address: Zoning Changes for Transit Oriented Development at and near the South Hills Junction	Parcel Number(s): <i>Proposed Zoning Map Amendment to change current zoning Park (P) to single-unit detached residential (R1D-H) for the following parcel: 15-C-83</i> <i>Proposed Zoning Map Amendment to change current zoning Residential Planned Unit Development (RP) to residential mixed use (R-MU) for the following parcels: 15-C-220, 15-C-222, 15-C-224, 15-C-226</i> <i>Proposed Zoning Map Amendment to change current zoning Two-Unit Residential High Density (R2-H) to residential mixed use (R-MU) OR local neighborhood commercial (LNC) for the following parcels: 15-H-296, 15-H-293, 15-H-292, 15-H-291, 15-H-290, 15-H-289, 15-H-288, 15-H-287, 15-H-286, 15-H-285, 15-H-284, 15-H-282, 15-H-281, 15-H-280, 15-G-017, 15-G-019, 15-G-020, 15-G-021, 15-G-022, 15-G-023, 15-G-023, 15-G-123, 15-G-124, 15-G-028, 15-G-120, 15-G-119, 15-G-118, 15-G-116, 15-G-31, 15-G-32, 15-G-33, 15-G-34, 15-G-35, 15-G-37, 15-G-38, 15-G-39, 15-G-40, 15-G-41, 15-G-42, 15-G-43, 15-G-114, 15-G-112, 15-G-111, 15-G-110, 15-G-108, 15-G-106, 15-G-105, 15-G-104, 15-G-103, 15-G-102, 15-G-101, 15-G-100, 15-G-98, 15-G-48, 15-G-46, 15-G-45, 15-G-44, 15-H-272, 15-H-273, 15-H-274, 15-H-270, 15-H-269, 15-H-268, 15-H-265, 15-H-264, 15-H-263, 15-H-262, 15-H-261, 15-G-130, 15-G-131, 15-G-132, 15-G-134, 15-G-135, 15-G-136, 15-G-137, 15-G-139, 15-G-140, 15-G-143, 15-G-144, 15-G-145, 15-G-146, 15-G-149, 15-G-150, 15-G-151, 15-G-152, 15-G-153, 15-G-154, 15-G-155, 15-G-156, 15-G-158, 15-G-160, 15-H-249, 15-H-250, 15-H-251, 15-H-252, 15-H-253, 15-H-254, 15-H-255, 15-H-256, 15-H-257, 15-H-258, 15-H-259, 15-H-260, 15-G-239, 15-G-238, 15-G-236, 15-G-237, 15-G-235, 15-G-234, 15-G-232, 15-G-230, 15-G-229, 15-G-228, 15-G-227, 15-G-225, 15-G-226, 15-G-224, 15-G-223, 15-G-222, 15-G-221, 15-G-220, 15-G-219, 15-G-218, 15-G-216, 15-G-212, 15-H-219, 15-H-217, 15-H-215, 15-H-212, 15-H-211, 15-H-210, 15-H-209, 15-H-208, 15-H-207, 15-H-206, 15-H-205, 15-H-202, 15-H-201, 15-H-198, 15-H-197, 15-H-196, 15-H-219, 15-H-217, 15-H-215, 15-H-196, 15-H-197, 15-H-198, 15-H-201, 15-H-202, 15-H-212, 15-H-211, 15-H-210, 15-H-209, 15-H-208, 15-H-207, 15-H-206, 15-H-205, 15-H-193, 15-H-192, 15-H-191, 15-H-190, 15-H-189, 15-H-188, 15-H-187, 15-H-185, 15-H-186, 15-H-184, 15-H-183, 15-H-182, 15-H-181, 15-H-179, 15-H-175, 15-H-174, 15-H-173, 15-H-172, 15-H-171, 15-H-170, 15-H-169, 14-E-11, 14-E-12, 14-E-13, 14-E-14, 14-E-15, 14-E-17</i>
Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): DCP Staff (neighborhood planners, zoning staff, and project team staff from Integrated Planning); evolveEA consultant staff; Public: 4 online (PRT staff, Council District 2 Staff, Knoxville Community Council member (only at the start), resident); and 9 in-house (Beltzhoover Consensus Group member, Mount Washington Community Development Corporation staff, area residents; affordable housing advocate)	
ZDR Application Number: DCP-MPZC-2024-00543	
Meeting Location: Mount Washington Healthy Active Living Center 122 Virginia Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15211 & virtually on Zoom posted prior at https://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/upcoming	
Date: 9.30.2024	
Meeting Start Time: 6:00 p.m.	
Applicant: Department of City Planning	Approx. Number of Attendees: 15
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Planning Commission	

How did the meeting inform the community about the development project?

Ex: Community engagement to-date, location and history of the site, demolition needs, building footprint and overall square footage, uses and activities (particularly on the ground floor), transportation needs and parking proposed, building materials, design, and other aesthetic elements of the project, community uses, amenities and programs.

General Notes: Agenda rundown, RCO introductions, DAM engagement process, Beltzhoover RCO background and history of prior outreach and MWCDC background and relationship to subject geography.

DCP Neighborhood Planner reviewed the DAM process, purpose behind presenting to a Board or Commission, and stressed that there will be additional opportunities to provide feedback on upcoming zone changes and potential development, including at Planning Commission. The DAM is a neutral platform to collect all manner of feedback. As there are two RCOs involved, DCP neighborhood planning is moderating the meeting; Zoning staff are monitoring the chat online for questions and comments.

Housing Needs Assessment (HNA): overview of the proposed zone changes came from HNA in 2022. There is a hierarchy of needs starting with people, housing and neighborhoods. Key findings included population loss in the Black Pittsburgh population, shift away from single family residential for denser housing types, housing costs outpace incomes and low-income housing units (LIHTC) are concentrated in only a few neighborhoods. There is a need to change land uses to increase housing supply tied to reliable transportation options. We are at step 0. These amendments must pass through both Planning Commission and Council so there are many opportunities to comment.

Zoning Amendments: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) come in a variety of models, including over a garage, in a basement, as a stand-alone unit or garage conversion. The benefits are found in increased sustainability, denser neighborhoods, serving multiple generations, and/or added rental income for single family residential. This zone change is meant to allow ADUs by right, as it is considered small scale development.

Minimum Lot Size: This HNA recommendation would remove minimum lot sizes per unit and reduce the minimum lot size to build on in the Moderate-, High- and Very High-Density Residential Zoning districts. This reform could increase housing density and would affect all zoning districts across the City.

Inclusionary Zoning: Ten percent of developments with 20+ units would need to be permanently affordable. There is potential for these affordable units to be built within ½ mile away.

Parking Minimum Reform: Existing parking minimum requirements of developers places increased costs to development that is passed on to future businesses and homeowners. By eliminating the parking minimums as a City requirement, instead the market would determine how many parking spaces are built. Transit Oriented Development

(TOD): This kind of development reduces reliance on cars and parking while increasing transit options, sustainable growth, and enhanced social equity. TOD supports the natural partnership between housing and transportation.

South Hills Junction: This is a high opportunity area for TOD with several light rail lines and bus routes aligned with PRT.

Zoning Changes: Properties were identified as some owned by PRT, vacancies, by parcel sizes, and if parcels showed potential for development which would extend LNC first, because it exists in the area. Option to keep LNC once extended or rezone all LNC to R-MU. Differences residents may want to consider between LNC, and R-MU include R-MU comes with performance points, step backs, urban open space considerations. Additionally, Grocery Store (Limited, < 3,000 SF) permitted by right within R-MU and Administrator Exception within LNC. Grocery Store (General <3,000 SF) permitted by Special Exception in LNC, but not permitted within R-MU. The South Hills Junction would have four rezonings: (1) rezone from Park to Multifamily Residential core parcels where South Hills Junction PRT facilities are located; (2) RP to R-MU at the South Hills Retirement Residence site; (3) extend Local Neighborhood Commercial (LNC) or Residential Mixed-Use (R-MU) to all the parcels within the rectangular area bounded by Climax St/Haberman Ave/Warrington Ave/Montooth St, and all parcels in the area bounded by Industry St/Curtin St/Climax St/Vincent Street, as all these area parcels are currently Two-Unit Residential High Density (R2-H); (4) LNC to R-MU. Possible development scenarios were visualized in simple 3D conceptual versions, including of the first location at Warrington Avenue PRT-owned sites by South Hills Junction (scenario for 300 units and possible IZ), of the site by the South Hill Retirement Residence (scenario for ninety 800 sf units) and thirdly, two areas along Montooth and Climax within the other proposed rezoning areas. These conceptual scenarios looked at minimum density, medium density, and maximum density (11 to 80 housing units) and align with peer development in the South Side, Mount Washington and Allentown.

eTOD: PRT is developing this kind of policy. We don't want another East Liberty moment. We want to ensure that the people of Mount Washington and Beltzhoover benefit from this.

Next Steps: DCP neighborhood planning staff provided instructions at the conclusion of the meeting on how to comment and attend Plan Commission. QR codes were shared as well as other ways to follow the process on the City's Engage Page.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
Any area where the lot size is less than 3,200 sf currently, you can't build on it?	No, you can build on it currently, but it would require an Administrator Exception if you don't meet the minimum lot size requirement. And if you would like to build on your parcel, you have to go through an extra hurdle which would be either a variance or Administrator Exception in order to build on those lots for new construction.
Is that 3,200 sf, is that concurrent with, if you have an empty lot, you can't build a moderate house on it, a newer house unless it's two lots next to each other?	So oftentimes what homeowners or developers need to do now, is combine parcels in order to build. This would alleviate that constraint.
[BCG rep:] If they reduce it, a lot of lots in Beltzhoover are 2,500 sf. So, if they propose that minimum lot sizes are 2,400 sf, then you could build on a single lot. You wouldn't need two lots. That's the whole purpose of this, to increase the housing in the neighborhood. I think 2,500 sf is small but that's what most of this is about. That's what most of them are right now.	I think the idea of these reforms is to bring what our Code currently says in line with what the built environment actually is. So, our current Code just has numbers that are too high for what the parcels actually are. And it's really a disadvantage to homeowners in the area.
Does this include on-street parking? They (developers) would not have to guarantee that there's a spot on the street for a house?	No, parking minimums are only tied to private property, not the Right of Way. It's not like the residential parking program.
In other words, if a developer comes in and builds ten houses in a row, he has to omit one of those houses to have a little lot so people can park their cars there.	Pretty much.
This is South Hills high school, correct? And you want to put more apartment buildings where the parking lot is? That is what I am understanding?	Pretty much. That is an underused parking lot.
But the health center is there. People drive there. I used to go there constantly. Where am I going to park if I have a doctor's appointment? And it's not like there's room on the street to park, because the people that live there, park there. You know what I mean? I'm confused by that decision.	It's a proposal. If someone doesn't want this, they could also not include parking in their development. If that development comes along, it could have structured parking as well.
My next question is, are all the units in the Senior Center in the school built already? Because in my understanding there are more senior living spaces coming.	[MW CDC rep:] There is a section of the basement that has not been completed. The (MW)CDC looked briefly to putting a food bank there. It was just hideously expensive. We looked elsewhere. Last I checked the basement, the lower floor, has not been developed yet. I don't know what their plans are.

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The school that is in Beltzhoover [former Beltzhoover Elementary School], is that building being converted to apartments also?	[BCG rep:] I think it's going to be senior housing. You must be 55 or older. That will be senior housing. Yes.
What areas, if I understood correctly, on Warrington Ave from Vincent to Curtin, I believe that's a... where's the designated housing going to go according to that schematic?	[BCG rep:] On Warrington. It would be a rezoning of the area, and if people want to come in and if developers or residents want to do construction themselves... because it would be mixed use, they could do something like a shop on the bottom and housing on top. You can't do that currently. Right, you can't do any type of stores or nothing in that area. They want the zoning change to put in commercial space in the bottom store, whatever and then have housing on top. And I believe the height restriction is 6... what's the height restriction? I believe it's six stories now.
Six stories? That's too big.	We want to keep things in line with what is in the neighborhood and that is something you can comment on, how high. For the residential mixed use zoning district there are upper stories that have setbacks so you can build up to 45 feet but at that 45-foot level you'd have to set your building back ten feet. And if you go up to 65 feet, which I don't think we'd be allowing in this zoning district. But in certain areas like in Oakland, it does allow that extra height, and you'd have to set back another 10 feet.
[BCG rep:] For most of the houses there, they already have a 10-foot setback, I believe. That wouldn't really change that much there.	
[Office of Council District 2]: I realize the ultimate goal is to create more density around these areas. What plans or incentives do you have in place to create amenities, I mean, with more density comes a need for more social services, more grocery stores, laundromats, those kinds of things. Are we going to be able to offer any programs or TIFs for businesses come in and create things for folks? I think any time you add that much density, you're going to put pressure on amenities that these folks have now. You see what I'm saying?	As my colleague had mentioned, this is more of a Step Zero. It's laying the groundwork. Considerations for Tax Increment Financing, working more closely with the URA, providing loans to create additional amenities, we'll work on that as well. These will be further assessed in the process. These are discussions we are having internally. I think one important thing we can bring up here is that PRT is creating a bulk-fares program for certain employers and certain developers and landlords. They can purchase transit passes from PRT in bulk. Then those developers, landlords or employers would transfer these savings to people that work or live in these spaces. So, if your employer or developer owns these properties, they would get a monthly transit pass, normally \$97.50/monthly for \$25. We hope that this amenity plays out across housing developments that occur in these zone changes. We hope that this program sparks more development that isn't just residential in this area. Other businesses will want to build out certain facilities there. These are conversations and we are working with the URA, what subsidies we can give

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	minority and women-owned businesses in the area. This is our step zero. We can have all these conversations. But if we don't do this, none of that can happen.
From Haberman and down, where PRT has that jump top, that big ugly fence, can nobody mess with that?	That's part of the development.
What do you mess they can't mess with that? In other words, PRT is willing to sacrifice their storage area.	They do have plans for their facilities and that's why they are exploring this rezoning, so they can do something else with that.
It's going to be their project? They'll develop it? In order to Anything would be an improvement on that junky, blighted storage area they have. do that they need to change the zoning from Parks so that they can develop it themselves. PRT wants to redevelop it.	That's my view buddy (laughter). All those lights on all night...
[Office of Council District 2:] Maybe it's a comment more than a question. My concern is parking. One of the issues we have in our office... I don't think a week goes by that I don't get a phone call from someone who has a parking issue. These vary from someone parking where they aren't supposed to be, all wheels on the sidewalk, people can't get by... My concern by your own standards you said, 25% of the people take public transportation. That means 75% of the people they bring in are still going to use a car. And so if you bring in an additional 100 people to Mount Washington area. I can't speak for Beltzhoover because I don't know that area very well. But if you bring in 100 people, 25 of them are going to have to take public transportation. 75 of them are going to bring a car. And where are we going to put those under these stipulations? That does not include folks that need to park within those new developments. That's a concern I have. That's it.	I do want to clarify one thing. That 23% is just the people that don't have access to a car. That's not the number of people that take public transit regularly. That's literally just the people who do not have their own car or access to one. Those percentages are not actual public transportation ridership figures.
Okay.	With transit-oriented development, you try to do a mode shift. So that 20% or higher right now, if we make the amenity better or when a developer makes it more inviting... if you walk along Warrington, it's not very inviting, just a big green fence. If it's something that is safe and accessible to children, for seniors, you'll find that when someone's lease is up on their car, they won't renew. They shift to a new mode and use public transportation or other forms of transportation. It'll be better in the future with less people using cars, making it easier in turn for other people to drive, to park. There are times when having a car or using a car is literally your only option, for example when public transit does not go to an area, or there are no sidewalks or bikeways. People with disabilities use cars to get around as it's

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	<p>easier, having a car that is disability friendly. Time and again for a number of projects, results from community engagement efforts people want to walk more, want to bike more, want to ride the bus more, but they just don't have the ability to. This is a Step Zero of getting closer to this goal. It's not a question or not of whether people want to use transit, because they do. Some people just don't have the option to.</p> <p>The zoning being proposed here, at least in the residential mixed-use district, there are strict design standards that it imposes. So, it requires that the new development would have a ten-foot sidewalk, and ground levels of the building that are at least 60% transparent. That would give visual interest to the street. You'd have more reason to want to walk down the street. There would be things you'd want to visit. In addition to that, there is an open space requirement of the lot being dedicated to public open space. This is another reason to get out of your car or go on a bike. It makes it more inviting.</p>
<p>[MWDC rep:] To reiterate what [Council District staff] said, she's right. Mount Washington parking is a big problem and if we had a better turnout here, that would have been the biggest gripe. I understand what you're trying to do, and I hope you pull it off. But you're going to get a lot of push back.</p>	<p>Changes won't happen overnight. Obviously if you don't want this as a community, then it won't happen. But if it does, you can ask for more parking.</p>
<p>[MWDC rep:] As a community leader I can agree that South Hills Junction is a blighted area, any of these plans sound like an improvement. This is Pittsburgh. In many places, cars are king. They are pretty high up there here.</p>	<p>[BCG rep:] It has to be more friendly for people to walk. Warrington Ave is not great for walking. Traffic is horrendous, flying up Route 51 past Haberman Ave. Those have to be taken into consideration. Even getting to the Junction from Beltzhoover, it's taking your life into your hands as it is. They don't stop for the pedestrian walkway. Those are things you really have to take into consideration. People may walk more if it's enticing.</p>
<p>First/last mile of connectivity is another concern. That's another important consideration. PRT and the City are working together to address those pedestrian connections and enhance pedestrian safety.</p>	<p>[BCG rep:] What we need is lighted pedestrian crosswalks. So that when a pedestrian pushes a button, cars have to stop so that a pedestrian can get across. It's the only way you're going to slow things down on Warrington. I'm telling you that right now, number one. The changes they've already made to South Hills Junction...years ago, you could take park and ride. Since the changes, you can't go down and park. Even if people wanted to take transit, there's no way to park and ride. It's dangerous. The residents that live there can't come home and park. They're going to have to make that more enticing.</p>
<p>[MWDC rep:] There's at least 15 spaces and this development could take that away. Those spaces might be eliminated.</p>	

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
The area in orange that's supposed to be commercial, we don't want to have a bunch of beer distributors, bars, and go-go joints. Would there be any kind of restrictions?	PRT would have to get community input.
[BCG rep:] Can they restrict or limit or is it a free for all as to how they use this retail space?	In the residential mixed use, retail services would be allowed uses, restaurants, that sort of thing. Whereas in residential districts you wouldn't be able to put that in. It depends on the specific zoning district. So, the RM or different zoning district could be amended as this progresses. As of the current code, there are some thresholds, which, if met, would require a Development Activities Meeting.
I know this is ground zero now. But would they give residents a chance to take part and purchase rezoned properties	As of now we haven't had that conversation.

Other Notes

Planners completing report: Nancy Hirsch, Thomas Scharff, Keith Portugal and Shubh Thakkar.