

Oakland Development Activities Meeting

May 29, 2019

Hosted by OPDC at 294 Semple Street

Project: 3440 Forbes Ave. – Wexford Science and Technology and Strada Architects

Presenter: Joseph Reagan, Pete Cramer, Abby Mountain, Christopher Kenney, Ann Garrity

Wexford Science and Technology presented their proposal to build a 13 story, 188 ft. building of mixed lab and office space on the corner of Forbes and Coltart. Wexford was joined by representatives from Strada Architects who are helping to design the building. As this was a follow-up to the development activities meeting on March 27th, the presenters recapped some of the feedback they heard from community members about traffic, building design and character, and community benefits. For the latter, Wexford suggested that they could hold regular meetings with stakeholders, invest in spaces to create active environments (Farmer's market, neighborhood senior housing, youth education programming), invest in local workforce training and STEM education in an effort to find more training pathways to create jobs in the neighborhood, and host events and programming that are open to the public. They also discussed the variances and special exceptions requested as a part of this project, specifically in regards to height, lot coverage, and residential compatibility. More specifics on the variances requested, the design of the building, and the beginnings of a community benefits package can be found on the presentation.

Q: How many lab floors?

A: 9 floors

Q: Vehicle stop to make sure car doesn't drive up with explosives?

A: No there is no requirement.

Q: Can you explain the FAR special exception?

A: FAR is the square footage you are building / the size of the site. In the code, this is set at 7.2. Our proposed FAR with public parking would be 11.8. Our proposed FAR without public parking would be 9. The more stories we put in, the higher our FAR goes.

Q: Will all stories above garage will be 15 feet high?

A: Yes, companies want their office space next to their lab space. Also, there are safety issues. For example, you can't eat in the lab. So each floor will be a mix of lab and office space, but it needs to be 15 feet high to accommodate the lab space needs. The building is intended to be multi-tenant.

Q: If one floor is only office, you would save some height.

A: True, but companies want their office and lab space on the same floor.

Q: In community benefits, you talked about all these things helping local residents get employed. Some looked good, but were not concrete. What is your schedule in terms of solidifying what you are offering to the community vis a vis the zoning hearing in July.

A: We are ready as soon as the community wants to sit down and have a conversation.

Q: Specific point – it needs to be solid before the hearing in July.

Q: You are another outside company coming in to make a profit, but we have been exploited already. The site used to be a supermarket. We can't support a grocery store. Innovation district was not collaborative with residents. We want to grow a residential neighborhood; Pitt has taken too much from us. This project is adding to the decimation of our neighborhood.

Q: When are you doing the traffic study and did you make sure to conduct it when the students were here?

A: They collected the data when Pitt was in, so the data has been collected and now it is a matter of finalizing the study.

Q: Coltart is backed up every afternoon, how will this project contribute to that issue?

A: We have to work with DOMI to make a plan.

Q: Lab vs non-lab?

A: No set ratio yet, hard to predict until we have tenants.

Q: Why did you choose front on Coltart and not on Forbes?

A: I may have misspoke, the lobby entrance going to elevators will be on Forbes. The entrance to the community space will be at Coltart and Iroquois. The main entrance is off Forbes, though.

Q: How will deliveries work on such a small alley, there are going to be huge trucks!

A: There are city requirements for how long the trucks can be. We have done some turning radius studies and will have three loading docks for the trucks.

Q: Did you already receive a height variance?

A: No we haven't, we have to go in front of the zoning board.

Q: What is a view corridor?

A: There will be a gap of space between the hotel and our building. We have said we are 15 feet from the hotel.

Q: I am here from the Hilton Garden Inn that is right next to the site. We are firmly opposed to anything being built right up against our hotel, we don't want our guests to be looking out their windows at a wall or a parking lot.