

February 3, 2021

Christine Mondor, Chair  
City of Pittsburgh Planning Commission  
Department of City Planning  
200 Ross Street, 3rd Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

RE: DCP-ZDR-2020-09427                      3500 Forbes Ave.

Dear Chairwoman Mondor and Members of the Planning Commission:

I submit testimony on behalf of Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (OPDC), a community-based organization whose mission is to build a better Oakland and help neighbors thrive. Fundamental to our work is communicating to the public about development proposals and hosting public meetings to discuss plans and proposals. We are also the Registered Community Organization for the four Oakland neighborhoods.

The *Oakland 2025 Master Plan* identifies the Fifth/Forbes corridor as an opportunity for new mixed-use development. *Oakland 2025* encourages integrating open space improvements into new development and fostering community-serving retail and businesses. *Oakland 2025* recommends development of affordable workforce housing.

CA Ventures participated in a community process about the proposed project. On August 25, 2020, CA Ventures made a preliminary presentation at the virtual Oakland-Wide meeting, hosted/facilitated by OPDC. Around 60 community members attended the meeting. Following this public meeting, OPDC facilitated a feedback summary questionnaire with three responses recorded. The main concerns that arose from both the meeting and the questionnaire were the building's design, height, and size; as well as a concern that there was not more retail space on the first floor. The other concern was related to the 40' setback of the properties on McKee Place, and the building's intrusion into the setback.

CA Ventures returned to present updates at our December 15, 2020 Oakland-Wide meeting, the required Development Activities Meeting (DAM). At this meeting CA Ventures presented revised and updated designs. They also stated that they discussed with the Port Authority about the proposed BRT station that will be in front of the property on Forbes Avenue; they plan to adjust the building's façade to accommodate the station. They proposed moving back the façade 10' and adjusting the building's entrance as to not interfere with the flow of the sidewalk on Forbes.

A major point of contention has been the 40' setback of the properties on McKee Place. CA Ventures provided a letter, dated January 8, 2021, to OPDC regarding the matter so that OPDC could share the

**We build a better Oakland and help neighbors thrive.**

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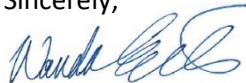
document on our website. The document claims that the property in question does not violate the 40' setback found on McKee. They claim that the plan's purpose was to grant the public and City of Pittsburgh certain rights to the streets, lanes, and alleys but not to grant building or setback lines. As this is one perspective provided by the developer and there is overwhelming community concern about this issue, OPDC believes this issue merits further review. OPDC encourages the commission to table action on this for further review by appropriate city department/board.

A neighboring property owner, Family House, provided to us a copy of their correspondence to commission members. Family House is an existing Oakland stakeholder that for many years has been helping individuals/families with critical health needs. OPDC believes Family House has valid questions and concerns about the project and OPDC encourages the commission to support Family House's requests per page four of their correspondence to the commission.

Many community members have expressed concern about the scale of the building and the "canyon effect" on Forbes Avenue. We share these concerns about the scale, as well as open space, and aesthetics overall. OPDC encourages the commission members to apply the highest level of scrutiny to the appearance of the building on behalf of our community. Additionally, in response to community feedback and OPDC input, CA Ventures has agreed that the first floor retail space will not be used for tenant-exclusive uses, such as a workout room, but will be a use that could contribute to the neighborhood amenities. OPDC requests that the commission incorporate this as a condition.

OPDC's biggest concern about this proposal is that this represents more market rate housing in our community with no provision for affordable housing. When we and members of our community voiced this concern to CA Ventures during community meetings, we did not receive a satisfactory response, nor did they change to their proposal between the August and December meetings to include affordable units. OPDC is an affordable housing developer, owner, and manager. We know first-hand the demand for affordable apartments in Pittsburgh and in our community. We request that the Planning Commission table action on this proposal until the developers create a plan to include affordable units to address the critical and urgent need for affordable housing. Furthermore, to support our goal of equitable development, we would also like to see CA Ventures commit to providing opportunities for M/W/DBE businesses and local hiring for the operations of the building. To conclude, because of the need for affordable housing in our community, OPDC cannot support the proposal at this time.

Sincerely,



Wanda E. Wilson  
Executive Director