



MEETING: Site Review Committee
SUBJECT: 21 Unit Apartments
ADDRESS: Triangle-Freeman, Garfield,
Linwood

LOCATION: City Hall
DATE: 2/1/05
ZONING: R-14
PARKING: 2/Unit
LOT COVERAGE: 60%
VARIANCES: Lot area; Height; Setbacks
Number of units

PRELIMINARY SITE REVIEW

IN ATTENDANCE:

Craig Phillips, Planning Director	(219) 462-1161
Tyler Kent, Asst. Planner	(219) 462-1161
Dave Pilz, P.E., Engineering Director	(219) 462-1161
Matt Kras, Stormwater Engineer	(219) 462-1161
Vicki Thrasher, Building Commissioner	(219) 462-1161
Dave Nondorf, Fire Department	(219) 531-9543
Daryl Brown, Water Department	(219) 462-6174
Bill Oeding, Public Works Director	(219) 462-4612
Tony McGinley, Collections Department	(219) 464-2346

PRESENTERS:

Larry Gough
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Media

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<http://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us/>

The following is a summary of discussion at this meeting:

The Site Review Committee met to discuss the proposed 21-unit condo or apartment building on the triangle at Linwood, Garfield & Freeman Streets. Phillips stated that site review is not an approval. It is meant to be a preliminary discussion of the requirements and issues to be considered by the developer or owner and there may be some cases where it will need to come back before site review or to seek other approvals.

Phillips advised that this project was brought before site review in February of 2003. If no permits have been issued after a year the project needs to be site reviewed again.

Gough advised that there have been no changes since February 2003. They are proposing to build a 21 unit multi-family building. It will either be a condominium or an apartment building. There will be parking in garages and on two sides of the building at two different levels. Linwood is at a higher elevation than Garfield so there will essentially be parking at grade on Linwood and at grade on Garfield. The additional parking will be in the driveway areas. The building will one of the nicer developments in that area. As far as variances go, he knows that he will need a variance for lot area and for number of units. One of the concerns brought up earlier was cars having to back out onto Linwood. At that time, Linwood was anticipated to be a primary access or feeder point for the University and he believes that the emphasis has been taken off of that since the original proposal. The University has added a main entrance on Hwy. 30 and they are anticipating putting another entrance on Lincolnway so he believes that the emphasis on Linwood has been refocused. They also anticipate that the buyers or renters of these units will be law students or university students so they will be parking their cars and leaving them there except for week-ends.

He does not believe that backing out onto Linwood will be occurring at a high frequency. There are current driveways from homes that tie into Linwood where the cars have to back out. From his own observations of the traffic, he does not feel that this is an extremely highly traveled road. It does have a reasonable amount of traffic on it but not enough that it would not allow cars to back out. There would be plenty of interruptions in traffic flow.

Phillips said that this is a very complex project from a planning standpoint. The variances are not insignificant. The lot area is a very big concern as density must be handled correctly. We are bordering on a very big potential issue with the number of units on this size lot. Other variances that would be needed, as was mentioned, is the number of units and that is a pretty significant increase. Another significant variance that will be needed is for front yard setbacks on both Garfield and Freeman Streets. The average setbacks do not apply since this is its own block. The requirement for front yard setbacks is 25'. It will require at least 42 parking spaces. Those are provided in the driveways on the drawings. Craig stressed that it is very important that those driveways be at least 20' in depth between the garage door and where the drive itself ends.

Gough advised that they do meet that. Phillips stated that there are six driveway accesses in a short distance which is a bit of concern from a safety standpoint. Linwood still is a major street within the City and the future goals of the University may change the amount of traffic on that street at any time. If sidewalks are required there are minimum standards for installation. This is a 3-4 story building and the height requirement is met on the Linwood side but it may be in question on the Freeman/Garfield side. You are allowed 40' so it may need a variance for height. You must measure from the grade to the halfway point between the eave and the ridge. This will probably not be as much of an issue as the other variances. Lot coverage is at 58.4% and they are allowed 60%. A landscaping plan will be required according to commercial requirements. Any signage regulations would be subject to the residential standards. Minimum lot size is 2,000 square feet per unit so that would be 42,000 and they will be asking for a variance of over 12,000 square feet. Based on this about 14 units would be allowed. Again, Craig advised that the variances needed are very significant and there is a potential concern that this is too much for this property.

Variances are supposed to be the least amount of relief to make a project happen. Maybe they need to look at this project again as it may not be appropriate for this site. If it is university housing it is very possible that the two parking spaces per unit is not even adequate and there would be a question as to where additional parking would be provided, just from a functional standpoint.

Pilz advised that the Thoroughfare Plan requires that before any permits are issued the full right-of-way width be dedicated and the street be improved to the local standards. In this case they are okay on Linwood and Freeman but on Garfield it appears that the existing right-of-way is approximately 35'. That would require an additional 7½' of dedication on their side of Garfield. Garfield definitely has less than a 30' width of pavement but he would recommend waiving the requirement to bring it up to standards so we don't add any unnecessary impervious areas. Pilz will not approve the access points onto Linwood. This was discussed at length at Traffic & Safety and they made it clear that this violates the normal standards for multi-family, off-street parking. It should come out in a typical driveway approach. Since this is becoming an alternate entrance into the City from Highway 30, allowing cars to back out into the street is not a good common sense thing to do especially with the site distance along the street and the increase in traffic. There are sanitary sewer accessibility questions that Tony will go over. If they do get to proceed we will need a detailed site plan prepared by a land surveyor or professional engineer showing elevations, dimensions, grades, etc. so that we can do an appropriate review of those plans. It will need to include an erosion control plan and drainage provisions.

Nondorf asked if this building will be fully sprinkled and Gough advised that it is required to be. Nondorf advised that we will require that the hydrant in front be changed out to a 6" connection. Brown said in the first go around they had talked about 21 individual water services. Has this stayed the same or would there be one service coming in and they would sub-meter it themselves.

Gough said that the most practical way would be for one service and they would sub-meter it themselves. Brown advised that we would require backflow at that meter and also on the fire system.

McGinley said that the surrounding sewer lines in the area are all six-inch and for a building of that size they would need to tie into something larger than a six. The nearest line that would be able to handle something like this is half way down to Mound Street. Between Freeman and Mound on Garfield there is a 12" line so to run that far would be pretty expensive. Gough asked if they could do multiple tie-ins into the 6". Pilz advised that 6" is the minimum size for an individual service so to connect 21 units into what is allowed for a typical residence service would not be allowed.

Gough asked if the City is going to extend the mains at any point in time and both Tony and Pilz advised that there are no plans for that. It would be the burden of the developer to put the sewer line in. Tony advised that it would be ½ block from the southwest corner of the triangle so it would depend on where they come out with the service as to how long the run would be.

Kras advised that we will need a drainage plan prepared by a professional engineer or surveyor. This is in a combined sewer area so it would need to store the run-off from a 100-year storm and release at a 2- year pre-developed release rate. An erosion control plan showing how they are going to keep sediment on the site will be required.

Thrasher advised that a State Design Release will be required for the building and the sprinkler system.

Oeding said that there are no sidewalks there now but any sidewalks going in would need to be put in to current standards with ADA ramps, etc. He is concerned about backing out onto Linwood.

This is an ambulance route coming into PMH and it is a narrow street to begin with in terms of the amount of traffic that it gets. They want to put a stop sign in which would have to go to Traffic & Safety to be reviewed. It might not be a bad idea but we would need to go out and study the area to make sure that it is reasonable. The whole area is hard for his trucks to get through because of the on-street parking in that area. Any place in that area where there are garages, the garages are not used for parking. They are used for storage and bedrooms and what have you, so the parking is spilling out into the surrounding area. The University has some parking areas around so if what they say is true and the cars will stay parked and the owners will walk to class and not use their cars so much it would be okay. He would recommend that there be no parking on both sides of Freeman, Garfield and Linwood with this density and number of people being added to the area to force parking in the lots and on the property. He does not feel that the University's loop plan and all will take any real burden off of Linwood. There is still going to be a lot of traffic coming off of Highway 30 and the people living in that area will be using Linwood to skirt around the University to find places to park. It may even become more traffic intensive as time goes on.

Gough stated that the stop sign on Linwood would help with traffic control and give interruption with the cars backing onto Linwood. Pilz said that he does not think it will meet warrants. If there is not enough traffic on Freeman to warrant the sign on Linwood it will not pass.

Gough said that to answer the bigger question of why so many variances on the parcel, obviously the shape has made it difficult to develop. To make a project like this economically feasible it does take variances to make it to work. With being triangular the setbacks restrict what you can build so there is an inordinate amount of variances required. 21 units are the key to getting the economics of this project to work. It will not work at 14 units. There is a demand for quality housing down in that area. He developed apartments in the Aberdeen area and they had over 30 law and university students who drive from Aberdeen to the University. It just makes sense that if they can produce quality housing in the City, right next to the University, they should do it. The issue with the stop sign is one that will have to be decided but he feels that it will add to controlling an area to allow for the intense uses that are already in that part of town. As far as lot area, it is again a restriction because of the shape of the site. He also said that if this was a University-owned parcel that the 2,000 square foot per unit would not be an issue because they can go all the way down to 500

feet. Phillips said that is true because there are other assumptions built in. These assumptions, such as parking, don't apply with a stand-alone project. No matter what you put on this parcel it is going to have an impact, whether it is University or private. Gough said he would argue that this is quasi-University development. As far as the square foot per unit he feels that this should be looked at again at a quasi-University standard. As far as the number of units goes, he would argue again that if it were a University building it would not be an issue. There are ways that they can develop this with firewalls, etc. that would allow them to develop this as five separate buildings instead of one large building but then they would probably have to look at the water and sewer issues differently. In summary, because of the area that it is in and because of the difficult-to-develop nature of the site, he thinks it should be recommended that the variances be approved. If not, he can not see any way to get that site developed. It is a unique location and can serve a good market for the students. It is supposed to be upscale and he is proposing something more upscale because he has seen the parents of these students pay \$1,200 a unit per month for something that is 5 or 10 miles away so why wouldn't they pay that for something that is right in their backyard. He would rather see it in the City than in the outlying areas.

Phillips said that to summarize there have been some major issues that have been brought up today. Obviously the variances are a pretty significant request. There is going to be some concern about density, which is a concern in the community at this time. The front yard setback variances are necessary although the impact may not be as big of a deal. There is an overall concern about parking and driveway access, especially off of Linwood Avenue. Being that it is in the university area those parking standards are going to be exceeded. That is just the nature of this type of property. There are also sewer issues to resolve. The variances are the first step. These are not issues that the community has never seen. Density, parking, multi-family units, etc. are all significant issues from various aspects within the City. The Traffic & Safety issues are significant as well. The variance approvals will determine where we go from here.

Gough asked for a recommendation on what to do. Should they go back and re-examine the issues brought up and re-present it to this group. Craig said that he feels that they should re-examine the layout of this project, especially the Linwood issues that were brought up. Variances are a necessary step in the process when they are appropriate but three or four is pretty significant. Gough said that, again, the number of variances required is due to the shape of the property. Phillips said that he realizes that the project is hindered by the shape of the property and there are encumbrances as a result of that, but 21 units is a significant number of units for a property this size without additional parking areas adjacent and things like that. We do not think that apartments in that area is a bad thing, but 21 units and the access issues are a concern for the City and may require re-examination. We are willing to work on the project but there are definitely some issues that need to be addressed. Gough advised that they will do some additional study on the project itself and will contact Craig to see if they need to come back to the Site Review or go on for variances.

ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED:

- VariANCES
- Landscaping plan
- Detailed Site Plan

Erosion control plan
Sanitary/Sewer
Right-of-way
Backflow Prevention
Parking
Access onto Linwood
State Release
Building Permit