

From: Past Chair
To: [Ramirez, Elaine](#)
Subject: D-8 C15-2021-0048 8300 N IH35 The Hedge
Date: Monday, May 10, 2021 8:21:55 AM
Attachments:

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

Hi Elaine -

Could you pass this on? Thanks!

=====

Chair, Vice Chair, Boardmembers -

I apologize for the late communication. The neighborhood team did not receive notification of the hearing, nor did the owner or their agent reach out to us.

As the stream of requests for changes and exceptions continues for this redevelopment, I am increasingly concerned that this is not a robust project for this applicant. While the concept of affordable housing sounds wonderful, if it's not realistic to build, much less operate, you're setting up the community and the owner, and most important vulnerable low-income residents, for decades of failure and frustration.

Affordability

The applicant's presentation characterizes the development as "deeply affordable". This description is more typically used for households at 25-35% of MFI, not the 60% proposed here.

History of Deficiencies

At the Sept 2019 BOA hearing, your backup included a list of recent code violations at the property, including significant structural issues. You were promised "if we get the variance, we will of course bring the building up to code". In fact, after the variance was granted, there were 29 more notices of violation in 2020 under the current owner, generally related to electrical work without permits. That is not a subtle or hidden violation: Are you an electrician? Is there a permit?

Additionally, the development services applications submitted for this property and the off-site parking property charitably could be characterized as error-ridden. Repeatedly, different applications stated different project characteristics for the same site, always somehow with the errors most economically favourable to the applicant. There were also several rounds of applications double-counting the off-site parking, despite reviewers calling attention to the issue.

Parking

At the Sept 2019 BOA hearing to decrease the site area requirements, the Drenner staff person assured you that they "commit to meet parking requirements". Instead, they are back with the basically the same argument - the project they have invested in won't be profitable for them unless you change the rules - to ask for you to change the parking requirement. Their original

D-8/2-LATE BACKUP

application seemed to suggest that anyone so strapped that they would live at this property probably wouldn't have a car anyways (and I guess don't any friends or family who might come visit). In fact 60% of MFI - about \$53,000 annual income for a family of three - is what professionals like teachers, medical technicians, etc make, folks who generally have do own vehicles, even when they live in areas which are safe and well-served by transit.

Pedestrian Access to Park and Transit

At the Sept 2019 BOA hearing, the Drenner staff person described this multifamily development as located "on a high speed roadway 55mph". I've met in front of the site with APD highway enforcement command who agree with the characterization that vehicle speed on the access road is comparable to the main lanes, 65mph by their estimate. Attached is a photo of the shared use path along the access road which residents without cars would have to use to get to the park, bus stop, or anywhere. This is the completed infrastructure. According to TxDOT, there will be no guardrails between the vehicle lane and the bike/ped path. According to AAA, even at the more conservative 55mph, someone hit by a vehicle has more than 75% chance of dying.

As well, someone traveling along E Powell to and from The Hedge also has to pass the dumpsters for Hedge 2, from the same owner. Attached is a current photo. The landfill dumpster has not been in the screening enclosure since he's owned the property. He's added a nominal recycle dumpster (which is actually used for landfill trash) without any screening. Aside from the trash, this is a prime site for street prostitution. APD has pretty much stopped arresting for prostitution, but in 2020 pre-COVID there already were 26 arrests at this location, almost all in daylight hours. (For scale, this is over 40% of all the prostitution arrests in the city.) That issue is not wholly the applicant's doing, of course, but if the dumpster were in the enclosure, that screened space wouldn't be available for other activities.

An adult with no other housing option might take these safety risks on foot or by bicycle to get to work or other necessary tasks, but it's hard to imagine they would let their children go to the park or bus stop. An adult with access to any better options would probably not choose to live in these conditions. A bike-pedestrian easement from 8300 N IH35 to E Powell through property already legally tied to this development through the off-site parking agreement would remove the high speed roadway risk.

Area Character

The applicant's presentation uses out-of-date aerials. Attached is a current photo of the apartment complex on the other side of E Powell Ln from The Hedge's off-site parking, shown on the applicant's aerial as a vacant lot. This complex has similar affordability targets for households below 60% MFI. At the same price point, it's hard to imagine someone choosing a bottom of the line renovation of an aging interstate motel over a brand new apartment with granite countertops, steel appliances, hard wood cabinets, open space, trees, and parking.

It is also unclear why the so-called urban core boundary is shown here. This arbitrary line, unrelated to any urban characteristics, is definitely a general hardship for residents and property owners north of 183. However, Council has repeatedly affirmed the disparate treatment of our area.

Thank you for your work.

Lisa Hinely

D-8/3-LATE BACKUP

North Lamar/Georgian Acres neighborhood team
<http://nlct.wordpress.com>

As Austin's most international district, the North Lamar/Georgian Acres neighborhood plan contact team believes that every resident is a valued member of our community, deserves to be treated fairly and with respect, and that when some of our residents live in fear of contact with public officials it makes all of us less safe, and has a negative impact on our community.

CAUTION: This email was received at the City of Austin, from an EXTERNAL source. Please use caution when clicking links or opening attachments. If you believe this to be a malicious and/or phishing email, please forward this email to cybersecurity@austintexas.gov.