



Village Planning Committee Meeting Summary

Z-78-24-5

Date of VPC Meeting	August 21, 2024
Request From	C-2
Request To	C-2 DNS/WVR
Proposal	Community residence center
Location	Approximately 1,000 feet north of the northwest corner of Black Canyon Highway and Northern Avenue
VPC Recommendation	Approval, per the staff recommendation, with direction
VPC Vote	11-0

VPC DISCUSSION:

Staff Presentation:

Chase Hales, staff, presented an overview of the rezoning request. Mr. Hales explained the location of the site, the requested zoning designation, the surrounding land uses, and the General Plan Land Use Map designation. Mr. Hales displayed the proposed conceptual site plan and the proposed conceptual elevations. Mr. Hales concluded the presentation by sharing staff's recommendation and summarizing the proposed stipulations.

Applicant Presentation:

Margaret Adams, City staff from the Office of Homeless Solutions, provided an overview of the proposed request. Ms. Adams showed the context of the site and shared that the site was located close to the I-17 freeway and adjacent to the future Innovation 27 campus, a workforce training and education facility that is planned by the City with partnerships with Arizona State University, West Maricopa Education Center, and the Maricopa County Community College District. Ms. Adams displayed the proposed conceptual site plan and stated that there would be no changes to the buildings' footprints. Ms. Adams shared that the proposal was to convert existing hotel rooms into individual units with their own cooking facility. Ms. Adams presented photos of the current conditions of the site, and then conceptual renderings of the proposal. Ms. Adams then finished the presentation by showing conceptual renderings of the planned units.

Rachel Milne, City staff and Director of the Office of Homeless Solutions, shared more related to the history of the site and surrounding area, explaining that multiple properties in the surrounding area had been vacated and had begun to attract illicit behaviors. As the surrounding properties have transitioned to other uses, many of the issues had decreased in the area. Ms. Milne shared her excitement to have housing opportunities for people with lower incomes in this area so they can become a part of the community and take advantage of some of the amenities to come such as the Innovation 27 project. Ms. Milne stated that although the proposal is City-sponsored project, the proposal is required to follow the same procedure as any other property being rezoned, and is why it was being presented.

Questions from the Committee:

Committee Member Pamperin asked if there were elevators given the age of the tenants.

Ms. Adams stated that there were no elevators, but that there were ADA-compliant units on the ground floor. Ms. Adams stated that the development is for anyone 55 and older, and explained that as prospective tenants are brought in, they will be matched with a unit that meets their needs.

Committee Member Pamperin asked what would be done if a particular tenant needed surgery or some other circumstance that would render the person unable to climb stairs.

Ms. Adams stated that tenants could be moved as needed to meet specific needs.

Committee Member Adams asked if the development would be open to the public or was targeting a specific group of people.

Ms. Milne stated that proposal was specifically planned to housing people older than 54 years that are making up to 30% of the area median income. Ms. Milne stated that project was not a shelter, but would be leased units that require rent.

Committee Member O'Hara asked what the expectations were for the length of time a tenant is to live in the facility.

Ms. Adams stated that the proposal was for permanent housing that had a standard 12-month lease and that tenants would be held accountable to the requirements of the lease.

Committee Member O'Hara asked if there would be staff on site to meet the common needs that come with senior populations.

Ms. Adams stated that there were plans to have the City initiate a Request For Proposal (RFP) for an on-site operator that would provide services and connect residents to other needed services.

Committee Member Carmona asked if the rent was stabilized.

Ms. Adams stated that the intent of the project was to have residents pay no more than 30% of their income.

Committee Member Carmona asked what materials would be used in the common area.

John Trent, architect for the proposal, shared that there would be a variety of amenities including shade, seating and opportunities for recreation such as walking.

Ms. Adams shared that there were plans to convert the southern portion of the parking lot to landscaping.

Committee Member Carmona asked for confirmation on what the number of units was.

Ms. Milne stated that the existing hotel buildings had 126 rooms and they would be converted into 126 units. Only 52 units are permitted under the current zoning.

Mr. Hales shared that commercial zoning when building multifamily follows the R-3 development standards by default. He stated that the density waiver increases the allowed density.

Committee Member Carmona asked for more information on the ecosystem of opportunities in the surrounding area.

Ms. Milne shared that there were several opportunities in the area, including the shelter to the north, Innovation 27, and the Helen Drake Center nearby. Ms. Milne shared that the Washington Elementary School was also supportive of the project.

Committee Member Adams asked if there would be rules for tenants to abide by.

Ms. Milne stated that similar to any standard lease, there would be expectations that tenants would be expected to follow.

Committee Member Pamperin asked if there would on-site security.

Ms. Adams stated that there would be on-site security.

Committee Member Pamperin asked if there would be opportunities for activity on the site.

Ms. Adams explained that there would be facilities for recreation outside and that there would be programming that would bring materials and activities to residents from outside the facility.

Committee Member Molfetta asked if there was a plan for the area to be improved on the southern portion of the property and if it would be made into an amenity for the residents.

Ms. Adams stated that the area would likely be developed in the future as landscaping that could be accessed by residents but would not be intended as a location for people to congregate.

Committee Member Sommacampagna asked if there would be an RFP process for the general contractor.

Ms. Adams stated that there would be an RFP process to hire a general contractor.

Committee Member Sommacampagna asked staff why the request was for a density waiver rather than to R-5 zoning.

Mr. Hales stated that he was entirely confident of the reasoning, but stated that it was most likely due to some components of the proposed use.

Ms. Adams stated that her team was instructed to pursue the density waiver due to some of the services provided on-site that are only permitted in community residence centers.

Mr. Hales added that community residence centers are not permitted in R-5 zoning, but are in commercial zoning.

Public Comments:

Debbie Perez, President of the North Glen Square Neighborhood Association, stated that there had been opposition against the proposal in the neighborhood due to lack of information. One major concern was related to behaviors of the future residents during the day outside of the property. With the housing units being so small, it was likely that residents would spend time off the property. Ms. Perez stated that with all of the other projects being built to address needs of the homeless, there were concerns that the needs of the local community were not being taken into consideration, such as safety, as well as police and fire support.

Committee Member Adams asked that if there was rent that was part of the lease agreement, would it not be expected that the residents would be working during the day.

Ms. Perez stated that the rent was so low that people on social security or subsidized housing would be able to pay rent without working.

Committee Member Sommacampagna asked if there was community outreach with the North Glen Square Neighborhood.

Ms. Perez stated that there had not been.

Tom Herdrich, community member, stated that he is willing to help others, but was concerned that due to prevailing crime in the area and the influences that come with it, that the location of the proposal was not conducive to helping people out of poverty. Mr.

Herdrich was concerned with the proposed number of units and the demand for services such as police and fire that would come with, especially with the future development at Metrocenter increasing the population further.

Jeff Spellman, member of the Violence Impact Project Coalition, stated that the Violence Impact Project Coalition was in support of the project, but had some concerns related to the project. He stated that he had worked with the shelter to the north had had asked when it was being redeveloped where the people would go when transitioning from the shelter. He stated that he felt that this was an answer to that concern. Mr. Spellman stated that he had concerns for what might occur outside of the property during the day. In order to prevent bad behavior outside of the property, he suggested that the proposal might be stipulated to follow principles used in the Crime Free Multi Housing program that had been used with other City projects.

Committee Member Pamperin stated that he knew that the Project Haven shelter to the north was a closed campus where people were permitted by application, and asked if it was accurate to assume that the people who might transition from there to the current proposal would be people who were earnestly interested in getting off the street.

Mr. Spellman stated that he was in agreement, and that his concerns were primarily in ensuring the safety of the residents who would live in the proposed development.

Committee Member Alauria stated that she understood that there had been a “good neighbor” agreement with Project Haven, but was interested to know how it would apply to the current proposal.

Mr. Spellman stated that it would not apply to the current proposal, but wanted to show how the community had worked to help make the area better.

Committee Member Adams thanked Mr. Spellman for his service throughout the years in the community and asked staff if it could be stipulated for the proposal to meet the standards of Crime Free Multi Housing.

Mr. Hales stated that he was not familiar with the program and did not have language on hand that could be adopted. Mr. Hales asked Mr. Spellman what prior projects had used a similar stipulation.

Mr. Spellman stated that the Helen Drake Senior Center had had a similar stipulation.

Applicant Response:

Ms. Milne stated that there had been a neighborhood meeting where members of the community, including Debbie Perez, had attended. Ms. Milne stated that the meeting had brought up exterior issues, and that City Councilmember Betty Guardado was planning on having another meeting. She explained that the Project Haven site was funded by an Arizona Department of Housing grant and would be opening in either September or October of this year. Ms. Milne explained that with incomes under 30% area median income, there was the potential that residents could pay rent with

subsidies or social security, but that her team had no intention of discriminating against tenants with those circumstances. Ms. Milne stated that her team would be open to included standards that worked to reduce crime, but was concerned that some of the criteria of crime free multi-housing would be too strict for some of the tenants targeted for the proposal.

Chris Anaradian, consultant for the Office of Homeless Solutions, stated that a potential stipulation could be to require the City to RFP for an operator that has experience with crime free multi-housing.

Ms. Milne stated that she wanted to have time to craft stipulation language with staff.

Committee Member Garbarino asked what would happen if a resident became unable to meet basic daily needs without assistance.

Ms. Adams stated that all residents must be able to meet their daily active needs, and that they would work to relocate residents who no longer were able to meet that requirement.

Committee Member Garbarino asked if the applicant was willing to commit to single-occupancy for the units, citing the size was less than 200 square feet.

Ms. Adams stated that the lease would be for a specific person and that like any other lease, there would be a guest policy that the individual would be held to.

Committee Member Carmona asked if there was potential to remove the walls of some units to increase the size of some of the units as well as reduce the overall number of units.

Ms. Adams stated that the idea had been investigated, but shared that there was simply not enough money in the budget to accomplish such an ask.

Committee Member Sommacampagna asked if there was a planned cost for the conversion of the parking lot into landscaping.

Ms. Adams stated that there were no specific plans, given that some of it was dependent on the costs related to the conversion of the buildings.

Committee Member Molfetta asked if plans could be visualized on the site plan.

Mr. Hales stated that from a technical standpoint, visualizing amenities on the site plan would not change the likelihood of the improvement occurring.

Mr. Herdrich asked if the utilities would be paid for by the residents.

Ms. Adams stated that rent would cover the utilities of the building.

Committee Member O'Hara stated that he was interested in putting forward direction for the applicant and asked if the Committee provided direction to create a stipulation that addressed criminal concerns, would it be agreeable to the applicant.

Mr. Anaradian stated that they would be willing to follow such guidance and work with City staff to create a stipulation.

Committee Discussion:

Committee Member O'Hara stated that he was interested in helping seniors who have lost housing simply because of rising rent prices, but was not interested in helping long-time criminals, and was supportive of providing guidance to create a stipulation that included some principles from the crime free multi-housing program.

Committee Member Jaramillo stated that seniors are the fastest growing demographic of the homeless population and that he felt it was critical to help seniors find housing.

Committee Member O'Hara stated that although 200 some square feet was certainly small, it was definitely better than on the street or in a car. He stated that with his work he would often find people who are in such situations and was sympathetic to the difficulties that come with unstable shelter. Mr. O'Hara stated that the applicant would be considerate in determining what crimes would be grounds for termination and would hate to see something like a speeding ticket be the reason someone did not receive housing.

Committee Member Pamperin stated his support for the project, citing that he had worked with people such as Jeff Spellman and believed that the proposal would be a positive improvement for the community.

Motion:

Committee Member O'Hara motioned to recommend approval of Z-78-24-5, per the staff recommendation with direction to create a provision prior to presenting to the Planning Commission that addresses the criminal components of the Crime Free Multi-Housing and "good neighborhood" agreements. **Committee Member Adams** seconded the motion.

Vote:

11-0, Motion to recommend approval of Z-78-24-5, per the staff recommendation passed with Committee Members Adams, Alauria, Carmona, Garbarino, Jaramillo, Molfetta, O'Hara, Pamperin, Sommacampagna, Whitney, and Vice Chair Matthews in support.

Staff comments regarding VPC Recommendation:

None.