

Mattingly, Gabrielle

From: Lisa DiChiera <ldichiera@landmarks.org>
Sent: Wednesday, August 26, 2020 4:53 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Russell, Kathleen; Mattingly, Gabrielle
Subject: Little Friends Campus

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Dear Vice-Chairman Jacks and Members of the HPC,

I understand the Naperville Historic Preservation Commission will be discussing the request for COAs and providing recommendations for the proposed redevelopment of the Little Friends campus at your meeting Thursday evening.

In November, 2019, Landmarks Illinois sent a letter to the mayor and city council supporting the HPC's recommendation granting Little Friends permission to demolish all buildings on its property other than the Kroehler Mansion, as it demonstrated appropriate evaluation of all the buildings and sound land-use planning. It upheld the belief that the primary historic building, found to be structurally sound, could never be built again today and should have the opportunity to be reused and wholly integrated into a larger development. We are very pleased to see that today a proposal is before the HPC that includes rehabilitation and reuse of the Kroehler Mansion within a larger residential development plan, as had been urged by the HPC with its denial of demolition for the Kroehler Mansion.

While I understand there to be concern about the height, massing and density of the proposed townhomes and their relation to the historic district, I want to offer examples of two projects (one approved and one conceptually approved) with the state historic preservation office that may contribute to your conversation. Both projects also involve institutional campuses with historic buildings planned for rehabilitation and residential reuse combined with new construction for additional residential units to add density to the sites.

1. In Elgin, Full Circle Communities rehab/reuse of the historic Larkin Center with new construction, multi-unit housing consisting of twelve new buildings containing 48 units. <http://www.fccommunities.org/1212-larkin/> - Approved by the IL State Historic Preservation Office and under construction.
2. In Chicago, CA Ventures proposed redevelopment of the former Immaculata High School campus with rehabilitation and reuse of the historic buildings and the addition of a new construction high-rise tower for additional residential units. https://www.james46.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/640IrvingPark_Plan_1-27-20.pdf - Conceptual approval from the National Park Service / IL State Historic Preservation Office.

While both of these projects will be using the federal historic tax credits and the Little Friends proposal does not, both are good examples of new construction, multi-unit housing approved for their historic sites in coordination with rehabilitation and reuse plans for historic buildings. The approaches are different based on their locations, but I show the examples to make the point that the addition of higher-density housing is not unusual for the redevelopment of campuses like that of Little Friends in order to assist in saving an historic structure.

I agree the HPC needs to look to the Historic Building Design and Resource Manual, especially as it pertains to the treatment of the historic Kroehler Mansion, but its section on new residential buildings only addresses infill construction of one house in the context of an existing streetscape of historic homes. It does not address new residential construction on what will be an open campus within the district where multiple structures can be accommodated. In this context, I encourage the HPC to look to the two above examples relative to the broader opportunity to provide new housing on the site in order to save the historic mansion. The Chicago example uses contemporary design for the tower, as to distinguish it from the historic, while the Elgin example uses design that is contextual to nearby residences. While the final number of row homes appropriate for the campus will be evaluated by the HPC with community input, my viewing of the townhome design proposed to date appears compatible to the Kroehler Mansion and homes in the district, relative to materials, rhythm of porches, design details for windows, doors, and rooflines.

I hope this information and my thoughts are helpful.

Sincerely,

Lisa DiChiera
Director of Advocacy
Landmarks Illinois

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