



Legislation Text

File #: 20-587, Version: 1

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

ACTION REQUESTED:

Consider Ram West Capital LLC's request for feedback regarding the redevelopment of the Little Friends Property.

DEPARTMENT: Transportation, Engineering and Development

SUBMITTED BY: Allison Laff, AICP, Deputy Director

BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:

Not required.

BACKGROUND:

Russ Whitaker, attorney for Ram West Capital LLC, has submitted a letter (attached) seeking Council's feedback on a number of business terms related to the redevelopment of the Little Friends Campus located at 140 N. Wright Street.

DISCUSSION:

To date, City staff has only reviewed conceptual plans (attached) for the proposed redevelopment of the Little Friends Property. Should Ram West Capital LLC choose to formally pursue redevelopment of this site, they will need to submit an application, fees, and all required technical drawings. Based on the conceptual plan, it appears that this project will be subject to review by the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and City Council.

Staff provides the following comments on the items raised in the attached letter submitted by Mr. Whitaker on behalf of Ram West Capital LLC. Staff does not recommend that any final design recommendations be made by the City Council until the project has been reviewed through the established process.

1. Little Friends Contribution. On May 1, 2020, Little Friends submitted a letter to the City (attached) which provides an overview of the history of bids received on the Subject Property. In this letter, Letter Friends requests the full incentive of \$562,000 from the City in exchange for recording a covenant on the Subject Property that will prevent the demolition of the Kroehler Mansion. Based on the offers described in the letter, City staff believes \$450,000 is the highest justifiable incentive amount, as this represents the difference between the highest current offers of \$4.95 million (without the Mansion) and \$4.5 million (with the Mansion preserved). Note: the details of an incentive agreement have not yet been finalized with Little Friends.
2. No Alley. Staff concurs that a dead-end alley is not a preferred design within a new residential development, particularly if that alley is publicly owned, maintained, and plowed. However,

staff is willing to consider a dead-end alley at this location in an effort to accommodate the preservation of the Mansion in its current location, as well as to maintain the detached alley-loaded garage design which is predominant in the Historic District. The feasibility of the dead-end alley design would need to be further evaluated following submittal of required engineering drawings and discussed through the standard application and public review process.

3. Architecture. Staff supports the concept of using a design guidebook in lieu of requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), which would be subject to review by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), for each proposed new residential unit. The guidebook would offer a comprehensive but practical approach that would provide materials, architectural styles, and other options that would be appropriate for each new home proposed. Following review and approval of the guidebook by HPC, each new building would be subject to administrative approval, provided that it complies with the guidelines established.
4. Stormwater. Staff finds that the City Council does not need to weigh in on this item as stormwater requirements for the Subject Property are determined by established Codes.
5. School and Park Fees. Through a separate agenda item at a future City Council meeting, the City Council will consider an incentive to the property owner to ensure the preservation of the Mansion. With respect to school and park donations, these donations are consistently required for any residential subdivision in which new residential units are created due to their resulting demand on the School and Park Districts. Staff does not find that the proposed development offers any unique circumstances by which a waiver of these required donations would be merited.
6. Utility Improvements. A 6" watermain currently exists on Wright Street and Columbia Avenue adjacent to the Subject Property. The developer will be required to construct an 8" watermain on Wright Street and either an 8" or 12" watermain on Columbia Avenue (note: additional water modeling will be done to confirm the appropriate size). In past projects in this neighborhood, the City has paid the cost difference between the 8" and the 12" watermain, as well as the cost to reconnect and/or replace the water services on the other side of the street. The developer will be solely responsible for construction of the new watermain on Franklin Street to service the proposed building on Franklin.

FISCAL IMPACT:

To be determined.