

800 Block
Development
Website



Notes from November 30 public meeting

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Update on 800 block development

What a great turnout at last night's meeting! At one point I counted 40 residents present. This was the best attended meeting to date. Perhaps it was due to the mailing? I suspect the mailing in addition to the provocative 16 story tower design earlier proposed. I thought the presentation by the developers was again, very well done. There was also good questions from residents.

First, a couple of changes to report from the last plan that was seen at the November 13 issue charettes:

1. Gone are the two 16 story towers. The tallest building on the current plan is 10 stories. The majority of the other buildings are 4 stories. There are two other, slightly taller buildings fronting E. Washington -- one 4 or 5 stories, the other 6. The 10 story building is on the corner of E. Wash and Paterson .
2. Gone is the mid block auto cut though from E. Washington to E. Mifflin. There is still a bike and pedestrian cut through, that includes a pocket park feel to it.
3. There is now a small private "street" that runs though the middle of the block that is parallel with E. Mifflin and E. Washington . There is a healthy amount of surface parking along this street to support the retail. The idea being that surface parking is more easily identified as available for users of the retail.
4. Gone is the multi story parking structure. Covered parking is all below grade.
5. Gone is the boutique hotel component. Further research by the developers proved that this would not be feasible without going much larger.
6. Gone is the senior housing component. The developers felt the market would not support it. They are hoping that there will be enough diversity in the condo offerings to appeal to seniors.
7. Retail has been reduced from 12,000 sq. feet to 8,000 sq. feet. Retail is not an area the developer has a lot of experience. This is an area that may change as we and they explore further our desires for retail.

8. Added was live/work loft type spaces. Perhaps with a wider commercial appeal than just artists - yoga instructors, piano lessons etc.

9. A neighborhood restaurant is up in the air.

10. Green roofs are undecided. The architects do have experience with them however.

According to the developers, the ability to scale back the project was the result of some major cost savings generated by lower building heights and less parking infrastructure. Apparently taller buildings require more engineering which greatly increases the overall cost. In addition, by reducing the number of units, they were able to remove the need for an expensive multi level parking structure.

Certainly the area of biggest disagreement between residents at last night's meeting was building heights. There is a healthy mix of those who think height can be ok, those who don't care and those who are adamantly opposed to it.

The argument for taller buildings centers around the desire for more density of owner occupied units in the neighborhood -- both to combat a decade of rampant urban sprawl, and to create a larger political base for the neighborhood. One particular desire was for more families to support Lapham school. The argument against is that there are no buildings of this size in the immediate vicinity. A tall building may not fit in and may even set a trend for larger buildings overall in the vicinity. It was noted by a Marquette neighborhood resident that the East Rail Corridor study area across E. Washington has a desired building height cap at 8 stories.

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