

Development Activities Meeting Report (Version: 01/24/2024)

This report created by the Neighborhood Planner and included with staff reports to City Boards and/or Commissions.

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: 4779 Liberty Ave	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Bloomfield Development Corporation Bloomfield Alliance
Parcel Number(s): 0051-A-00134-0000-00	
ZDR Application Number: BDA-2025-05558	
Meeting Location: Zoom	
Date: 10/2/2025	
Meeting Start Time: 6pm	
Applicant: Michelle Hobbs	Approx. Number of Attendees: 7
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Zoning Board of Adjustment	

How did the meeting inform the community about the development project?

Ex: Community engagement to-date, location and history of the site, demolition needs, building footprint and overall square footage, uses and activities (particularly on the ground floor), transportation needs and parking proposed, building materials, design, and other aesthetic elements of the project, community uses, amenities and programs.

This proposal is for the installation of a 34.72 sf ground sign with electronic gas price display in LNC zoning district.
The applicant provided before and after images using a rendering of the proposed electronic 7-Eleven sign. The applicant described the signage as essentially numbers on a piece of paper that can be scrolled electronically.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
What is the actual zoning like? What's the ZBA? Why are we here for this meeting? What is asked of us, the community members, right?	Neighborhood Planner: We're here today because the zoning code does not allow for electronic signage in the LNC zoning district.
What is LNC?	Neighborhood Planner: Local Neighborhood Commercial
Do you know why it is not allowed? Is it brighter? Taller? Is it more invasive?	Neighborhood Planner: Yes, the zoning is to control for things like that. It is interesting, now that I'm learning more about this particular signage and, Michelle, correct me if I'm wrong, it seems the project has changed from what was originally proposed, the zoning is to prevent actual digital electronic LED light up signs that would maybe be disruptive to the neighborhood. Applicant: Yes, originally, they did want LED digits. I can show you the original (pulls up original design). What they

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	<p>wanted would be digital LED digits, just like a lot of gas stations that you see. We were told that LED digits would not be allowed at all, even with this meeting, and that we would have better option to go with this (current design) because it doesn't look digital, even though it is technically still electronic.</p>
<p>Because of the brightness, I'm assuming. Does anyone know why one is better than the other? Or why one is allowed and the other is not?</p>	<p>Applicant: I'm not really sure because they can adjust the brightness on the LED digits just as well as they can this sign as well. So I'm not really sure why it is not allowed. We're just going off what we were told by zoning.</p>
<p>Okay, so this went through before and Pittsburgh, the City, said it would be allowed for the LED, but this correct modification could be allowed.</p>	<p>Neighborhood Planner: It's still not permitted; no electronic sign is permitted in LNC zoning. So this does require a variance because it's an electronic sign. It seems like this electronic sign is different than what was originally proposed, but they still need to go to ZBA.</p> <p>Applicant: We have the ZBA meeting 11/6</p>
<p>So there's already a meeting set up?</p> <p>I wish somebody could explain the difference and why one is permitted and one is not. That would be the smart thing to know.</p>	<p>Applicant: Yes</p> <p>Applicant: Ultimately, this is not permitted which is why we're trying to get the variance so that they can have the electronic scroller.</p>
<p>I get it, but I still don't understand the difference between the two and the impact it'll have on the neighborhood. I mean, at that location, my concern is the residents that live above some of the businesses, and is this eye level with their apartments? Are they going to be invaded with brighter lighting?</p> <p>Is it the same as the sign that's there or taller?</p>	<p>Applicant: This sign isn't that tall at all.</p> <p>Applicant: Yeah, it's the exact same size as the sign that is there. It's just replacing the gas price face, that is all. All like the "Sunuco", the "7-Eleven", the "Oh, thank heaven!", all of that is still there. We're just replacing the gas price faces.</p>
<p>Is the sign just facing one way, or is it digital on both sides of that sign?</p>	<p>Applicant: It would be on both sides.</p>
<p>So it doesn't scroll, it doesn't flash, it doesn't blink.</p>	<p>Applicant: Currently it does not, no. They are asking for the scrollers instead of what they currently have, and even then, it wouldn't flash. It wouldn't be that bright. It would literally just, when the gas price changes, it would just scroll to the digit that it needs to be.</p>
<p>And it'll just be one gas price? It won't be saying regular, and then scrolling in a minute and saying, you know, super...</p>	<p>Applicant: It'll just be one price, and it will only change as the regular gas price changes.</p>

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<p>Okay so won't be scrolling, you know, as we're driving down the avenue, walking down the avenue, to change from one regular gas to super or something like that.</p>	<p>Applicant: It is only the regular gas price.</p>
<p>So the scroller, the 22 inch scroller, is going in right? But is the rest of the red part also different or is that what's existing now? The 98 inches by 51 inches.</p> <p>Got it so whatever we see currently now, as far as the red part being lit up, it's going to be the same thing as in the proposed one, is that correct? Which is just like lights behind this red plastic thing, right? It's not LED.</p>	<p>Applicant: It's the same. That is the same size that is currently there. The only thing that is different is that we're getting rid of the two prices and changing it to one, and that one price will scroll as the gas price changes.</p>
<p>If this is presented to ZBA, and it is approved as a variance, does that mean that any kind of electronic sign would be okay to swap out afterwards? Or is this the specific electronic sign being approved by the variance. I just don't want, a couple months down the road and they're like "Well, we were told an electronic sign is okay by variance, so we're going to put whatever we want inside now that is electric." I just want to know that just because they got this variance back in 2025 they can't go and put whatever sign they want. I just want to be protecting our butts over here, right?</p>	<p>Applicant: My understanding for the variance is it is just for this type of electronic sign. The LED digits would be a separate thing and that would not be approved. It would just be this type of electronic sign.</p> <p>Neighborhood Planner: My understanding is that if it does get the variance, it is permitted to maintain this electronic sign indefinitely. If it gets switched out for a different electronic sign, it's only allowed if it's the same size and type. So it couldn't be switched out for like, an LED or something.</p>
<p>We appreciate the clarification. That Marathon at 40th and Penn there by the fire station, on that same side of the street across from York Commons, when they put a new sign in there, there were some problems, because initially it was flashing, it was scrolling messages and things, and the light that was shining, you know, across, which is kind of at an angle, not directly across, like the flashing and the scrolling, was very troublesome to people, and they worked with the community organizations and got the gas station to stop doing that, because it was, it was a pain. It was really bothering folks. So that certainly was my concern about either an LED or something that would scroll a message across or flash. I think that would be a lot more disruptive or problematic for near neighbors. So thanks for asking.</p>	
<p>I'm assuming that you are not part of the owner's team, or you're not, like, an owner of this.</p> <p>Got it. Okay, I'm wondering, if you're in Pittsburgh, I'm not sure if you're familiar with this actual site, but this is a very interesting intersection in that it's the one intersection that is next to a hospital. The other two corners have restaurants, and there's a lot of people walking back and forth. There's a very busy bus stop right there, and then we have the 711 Sunoco. There is a crosswalk, but there's no light or anything. So we've heard from community</p>	<p>Applicant: No, we are the signed contractor.</p>

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<p>members that this is a very, in a way, dangerous pedestrian crossing, right? Like there's just a lot going on. I'm wondering if you can relay this to the owners or something--since this is the one corner out of the four that is kind of very vehicle driver centric versus the other three corners-- if there's any possibility or any opportunity for the community to work with this owner to get something at that corner, like, as far as flowers or something nice. It's just, there's an opportunity right now. There's always trash or bagels sometimes, like, people throw bagels for the birds. There could be opportunities, maybe just some landscaping or some culture or something there, to lessen how drastically empty this particular corner is compared to the other three corners-- where there is a wine shop, there's an award-winning restaurant, there is a busy bus stop with a hospital. Is there any way that, with the upgrades to the sign, could the owners also consider something like increased landscaping or planters, or some sort of giving back to the community on this particular corner just to make it a little bit more less drastic of a change, visually and esthetically?</p>	
<p>That leads me to a comment. I've heard a lot of complaints about, I don't know if it's new management at that 7-Eleven or not, but whoever was managing it before was very aware of litter and garbage and did a good job, and whatever's going on now, it's not happening. They're not picking up after themselves. It's a litter trap in that corner, and it's not being cleaned up like it was before by the owner or by the management of the property. So people aren't happy about what's going on at that corner. Just wanted to tell you that.</p> <p>We haven't approached them yet, because it is relatively a new complaint that we're hearing at Bloomfield Alliance, but it is something on our list of things to address with management.</p>	<p>Applicant: I can definitely bring that up to them. So we are working for 7-Eleven from what I understand, somebody else actually owns the convenience stores, but I can pass it on to 7-Eleven and see what they say. I don't see why landscaping would be an issue or picking up the litter. For that matter, right? I can definitely pass those along.</p> <p>Applicant: I mean, I know in the past, we've had other variances that have been approved as long as we do these things kind of thing.</p>
<p>Would that be considered conditions under the approval for the ZBA?</p> <p>I know that in previous Development Activity Meetings, if we did give an approval, sometimes there would be, like a condition with approval, like, yes, we approve that this three-story thing is allowed, but only if the condition is that the developer also looks into, like, whatever the condition was, right? I don't have the problem off the top of my head, I can't think of them. But we have had a lot of conditions. For example, the hotel that was on Penn Avenue. The conditions were like, looking at adding more street trees, or adding bicycle parking on the side, or something like improving pedestrian safety at their garage exits, something like that. So I don't know if that would be</p>	<p>Neighborhood Planner: I'm going to include that in my notes. As RCOs, you can also submit letters stating where you stand on the project, and include conditions.</p>

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<p>also something we could put here where we would love a more holistic look at this corner. That if we are to approve the esthetic improvements to the sign, by making it a bigger just one digit, one regular price, and make it easy for them, that there's also potential to have later cleanups and more landscaping there. I don't know if there was a way to write that into the letter for the ZBA committee.</p>	
<p>Yeah. Shoshana, if that's something that's needed, you know, Linda's here on behalf of Bloomfield Alliance. I'm here for the Senator and also for BDC. I'm still on the board of BDC. If that's something you're requesting from BDC, let us know that if that would be needed as</p>	<p>Neighborhood Planner: The city, we don't require it. We don't require RCOs to take a particular stance. But if, as an RCO you do want to do that, it is perfectly within your rights to do that.</p>
<p>Okay, we will do that. Bloomfield alliance will do that. We'll submit a letter approving the change and putting, asking for these conditions, minimal conditions, on approval on that, that's something we will do. Cool. Thank you.</p>	
<p>I'm just speaking now as a community member. If this is what's proposed, then I would not have any significant issues that ZBA would somehow not approve this. It seems like this is sensible. If it was to go into something like an LED, something bright, I think that's something that I would want to hear more from my neighbors, maybe those who live directly there or close by. But it seems like if this is what's proposed, then I think that generally, from what I'm hearing from both Linda and Jen and myself, that it is generally okay to move forward from a ZBA standpoint, and I'll leave it up to Bloomfield Alliance and Bloomfield Development Corporation to kind of figure out if there are other conditions that go with it that would be relevant to the rest of the corner, whether it's cleaning up or abiding by litter kind of ordinances and whatnot. Thanks. Thanks, everyone.</p>	
<p>I'm just curious, is there a reason, I realized that Michelle is the interstate Sign Company. You're the applicant, because you're the entity that will be actually installing this change in the sign. Was I wrong to expect that somebody from 7-Eleven Corporate might be here? Or somebody from the store? I did give the store manager the invitation, so they did have a copy of that. I did do some flyer and notification of businesses directly across from there, because I think that's where that sign that change might have the most impact.</p> <p>He (the store manager) seemed unsure whether it should be him or someone from corporate. So I have no interaction with anybody at the corporate level, just with the folks at the store. So he seemed unsure as to whether he was supposed to do that or not. I said, you know, if</p>	<p>Applicant: I was under the impression that somebody from Customer Service would be on the call. Like I'm not necessarily 7-Eleven Corporate, but somebody else was going to be on this call. I'm sorry. I was under the impression somebody was going to, but it doesn't look like they got on.</p> <p>Applicant: Yeah, I know. So essentially, we work for 7-Eleven, but 7-Eleven has hired someone to make the sign, and then they have hired us to install the sign. So the company that has hired us to install this on, they are the ones that I pass on all my information to. And she had said</p>

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they tell you no, then don't, but my understanding is that you would certainly be welcome to attend that and I made sure he had it. I gave him a paper copy, and I sent it to him via email.	this morning that she was going--she or someone else on her team--was going to be on the meeting. And I guess, I don't know if there was a time issue or what, but I don't see them on here.
Well, thank you, Michelle, for coming. You did a great job.	Well, thank you.
So in the 7-Eleven window, I was over there on Friday, last I looked I noticed that there was a Zoning Board of Adjustment virtual public hearing date of October 16, 2025, I think I heard either Michelle or Shoshana mention a different date.	Applicant: Yeah, because this meeting got rescheduled to today, the other the Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting had to get pushed back as well, so the new meeting for that day is going to be 11/6 and there will be a new poster getting put up.
Alright, thank you.	
I will check once the new sign is posted. Originally, the Zoning Board of adjustment sign that was posted for October 16 has a QR code on it. When you scan that QR code, it takes you, you kind of have to find your way through the calendar to go to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. So it doesn't take you directly to the meetings for that. You kind of have to scroll through some other city stuff and look for Zoning Board. But at the time I checked it, that October 16 meeting was not listed, and that was before our prior dam. So I'm hoping that when they post the sign the QR code will actually have the meeting listed on the calendar for the Zoning Board of adjustment.	Neighborhood Planner: Yeah. If, with the new one, if you have an issue with the QR code, just send me an email. I know that when I got the agenda and I saw that this was on October 16 th , I was like, this can't happen. But, if you guys are notifying me when you see something is incorrect or not working it can maybe reach me faster, too.

Other Notes

Planner completing report: Shoshana Davidson