

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: 1600 Bingham St	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): SSCC [South Side Community Council] Board South Side Flats Residents Applicants [the architect and the civil engineer] DCP
Parcel Number(s): 12-E-284	
ZDR Application Number: BDA-2024-06953	
Meeting Location: Virtual on Zoom	
Date: January 16, 2025	
Meeting Start Time: 6:00 pm	Approx. Number of Attendees: 12
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): ZBA [Zoning Board of Adjustment]; To be reviewed and approved a variance for a non-conforming use.	

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.

During this virtual meeting, the SSCC explained the DAM process and what their roles and responsibilities are as a Registered Community Organization [RCO]. They also outlined some base rules for participating in the virtual DAM. Then the applicants gave us an overview of the history, the function(s) of the building, and the proposed renovation plan and thoughts, and the timeline for it.

The project team lead explained that this would be a conversion of the McArdules Tavern that was in business for decades- since 1930s to 2024. The current owner purchased the property recently. The property contains a little over a 1400 sq.ft area. The zoning map shows the zoning district which is residential. The same map also shows other local businesses of similar make-up. Presenting the exterior photos, he mentioned that the McArdules Pub has been there for years and pre-dates the zoning code. He presumes that under the zoning code, the pub operated as a non-conforming use- a commercial one in a residential district.

Then they present the floor plans for Ron's Juice Bar. They want to keep as many of the fixtures as possible and clean it up and meet the codes and standards for the renovation permits. The architect explained the floor plans after this. Currently, it's used as a bar [and] apartment. The first page shows the floor plan for the existing bar area. The owner wanted to do a fruit version of the alcohol bar keeping the building as is. He likes the historic nature of the building. The previous owner has moved out and the current owner has gone in and cleaned up the space quite a bit already. He wants to keep the existing Irish flavor, the central oval bar, and the ambiance, adding a new mood here and there. He will serve all non-alcoholic drinks- juice, fruit cocktails, protein shakes etc. The back room- former billiard room- he wants to use it as a seating area. There are two entrances- one on the 16th st and the other on Bingham st. There are two existing small bathrooms- one in the front, and another in the back for the ladies. He wants a light touch for now, and see how the neighborhood grows around him or with him.

Upstairs, there are three bedrooms upfront and a rear kitchen. It was a commercial kitchen that existed above the bar area. There was a dumbwaiter to serve food to the other floor. The applicants will turn it into all business use up there, the same as the downstairs. There will be no apartment here. They will remove the commercial kitchen in the back and create a staff lounge there. The bedrooms will turn into the owner's office, the general manager's office, and an extra office as needed. They hope to do minimal (renovation) work in there.

The applicants explained that the proposed use would not have any adverse impact on the adjacent properties and residents. They did consider reverting it back to a residential but it didn't make sense from a financial standpoint, looking at the current market conditions. They shared a link to the owner's similar business in other cities to depict his philosophy around this and how successful those have been. The owner has always looked at urban areas, blending in with the neighborhood, and always worked with the zoning codes and boards with the respective city. For this one, he would like to hang a sign from the existing angle brace that's on the front corner of the building, if approved by the ZBA.

The SSCC board then opened up the floor for questions/comments.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
. Are you doing anything on the exterior of the building? Especially looking at the building in Philadelphia you showed at the end, just wondering if you are looking to freshen up the building exterior or not.	No. For now, it stays as is. We are going to go with existing alteration, nothing on the outside except for the small sign that we mentioned. The owner does not want to do anything brash. We will probably just remove the Gold Leaf Pub sign from the front, and add the new business's signatures on the inside of the window. The architect also appreciates the existing building, and wants to keep it as is. Additionally, the owner also doesn't want to add any outdoor seating or such. All of it will remain inside. Most of his clientele usually come in, get their drink, and leave.
. I looked at the website [Ron's Coffee] and it says they are a "for-profit B-corp Church". I was wondering what this entails and if there will be any religious services held at the facility?	. [Architect] No, I don't think so. The owner isn't attending tonight, but I don't think he is interested to turn it anything religious.
. Just for clarity and for everyone's understanding: you are leaving it all be a business so that you are not a mixed-use, and that also doesn't require you to put in sprinklers in the building, right? That's a big cost here in renovation, so you are avoiding any new separation and any need for sprinklers due to the separation, right?	. Yeah, I agree. Just to get into the international building code, this type of building would be considered a 3B non-combustible exterior building with a wood frame. So, you are allowed to have two stories. Now, this one has an attic area which is kind of small. I haven't gone up there, but I don't think it's really occupiable space. But, we are going to keep it as one use- business- as we are going to have less than 50 occupants in the building. The code allows for small coffee shops be business use, without putting in sprinklers. That would be cost-prohibitive, and not needed in our case.
. I am just making sure that everyone here understands this. And, the owner doesn't come in later to throw in a bedroom and make it a rental.	. I agree. The City's building and zoning departments will also not allow that.

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
<p>. What will the basement be used for? Storage? Is that going to be a part of the juice bar or remain storage?</p>	<p>. Unfortunately, I couldn't get in there. It's not easily accessible, so, no. Not for now.</p>
<p>. My understanding from the time of the sale was that the parking lot across the street and the adjacent house were also part of the sale. The parking lot across- it's under the same contract, right? Have you since divided up the parcels?</p> <p>. We just want to make sure that the owner doesn't come back and say they want a variance for no parking, but they sell the parking lot to somebody else etc.- we are probably not going to allow that. Parking is rare, and he has acquired two buildings here with a parking lot. So, he can't just sell the lot, and later ask for a variance for no parking. The community will not be in support of such venture capital stuff.</p>	<p>. No, based on our survey, they are separate parcels, separate transactions, and separate deeds. What the owner intends to do with those properties- he hasn't shared with us. We are working to renovate this one building only.</p> <p>. We understand.</p>
<p>. What's going to happen to the trash?- it's a big concern of ours. We do not want to see any trash being left outside at the alley. The alley is not yours- it's city property. You need to find a place inside your building to store trash and recycling until trash day. You will probably have a commercial pick-up. So if it's not every day, you need to make sure you store it until the designated day inside your building, not outside in the alley, unless you want to use the land across the street or such.</p>	<p>. We understand.</p>
<p>. Does he need a dumpster?</p> <p>. Maybe he will compost!</p> <p>. The previous pub used to keep a small dumpster in the lot across the street and would store their trash in there. Something to keep in mind.</p> <p>. And, if you do get a dumpster, we would encourage you to do some sort of enclosure for that. Otherwise, in urban settings, you tend to get mattresses or lazy boys thrown in there. So, some sort of secure enclosure will be necessary.</p>	<p>. No, just a commercial pickup contract and schedule.</p> <p>. The owner uses a lot of fruits. So, we will have to see how he wants to deal with the peels and the pulp in a sanitary manner. There is a room back there for some flip-top trash cans. He does not produce anything with grease. He uses a lot of disposable cups. He doesn't use ceramics, and we never discussed a dishwasher. I am assuming he will be using biodegradable material.</p>

Other Notes

After the presentation, Q/A and other discussions around the Development Activity, SSCC board explained the next steps. They have a 30-day review period. They invited the participants to send their questions and concerns to the board in the meantime, if any.

Planner completing report: NT