

**BLUE ASH PLANNING COMMISSION**

February 6, 2014

Page 1

**ITEM 1: MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

Vice Chair John Berry called the regular meeting of the Blue Ash Planning Commission to order at 7:03 p.m. on Thursday, February 6, 2014.

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Berry, Paul Collett, Jr., John Moores, and Jim Sumner

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Raymond Schafer

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager David Waltz, Assistant City Manager Kelly Harrington, Community Development Director Dan Johnson, Mayor Lee Czerwonka, Council Member Stephanie Stoller, and interested citizens

**ITEM 2: OPENING CEREMONY**

Pledge of Allegiance

**ITEM 3: APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Commission members waived the reading of the minutes.

DECISION: Paul Collett moved, Jim Sumner seconded, to approve the regular meeting minutes of November 7, 2013 as submitted. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

**ITEM 4: HEARINGS**

**a. Reed Hartman Highway and Ilmenau Way – Anderson Birkla Investment Partners**

Zoning Map Amendment to rezone approximately 7.063 acres from M-1 to M-3 Planned Office and Mixed Use

PRESENT: Anthony Birkla – Applicant

Tony Birkla said they were an Indianapolis-based company with regional offices in Cincinnati and Dayton. The company was founded in 2007 with the sole purpose of developing Class A mixed-use lifestyle communities geared towards the young professional renter by choice. They own approximately 900,000 square feet of mixed-use development in the greater Cincinnati area and he provided information on those developments.

Mr. Birkla said the site in Blue Ash is currently owned by Duke Realty and they have been working with Duke for the past two years to create a mixed-use concept for this property. At one point, this property was zoned M-3 with a different concept in mind of a bigger mixed-use project which did not happen so the zoning reverted back to M-1.

They are calling the development iLoft at Legacy Pointe, taking off on the name of the neighboring property, intelligence. The development will consist of 185 luxury residential units with a very specific audience in mind. They will bring a lot of amenities, including office, coffee and café in a single 4-story building with

**BLUE ASH PLANNING COMMISSION**

**February 6, 2014**

Page 2

elevator. They designed this using their “Smart Growth Principles”. The first principle is enhancing the quality of life of their residents and the overall community. Every decision they make from the selection of the site to the delivery of their product, they try to create “The Resident Experience” through Denizen Living. They also try to alleviate the need for transportation by creating facilities within the project such as the fitness center, the pool, and the picnic areas so the residents can have these amenities at their disposal. They place their developments adjacent to employers and parks and create pedestrian connectivity which reduces overall auto trips for residents. They provide bike storage for all residents within the community, which promotes bike use, and put their developments in communities where they can connect to public walks and trails.

They spent significant time looking at perimeter landscaping, buffering, and parking areas on this property. There are two tree lines they are preserving on the south and east sides and will provide a variety of outdoor amenities, including a heated pool and spa with cabanas and outdoor garden areas. They provide internal courtyards with fire pits and they try to provide other amenities such as a dog park and take advantage of the open green spaces. The residential units are customized with 42-inch cabinets, granite countertops, and all the upgrades. They go above and beyond with the amenities, to create a resort style living, with over an acre of open active space. The 5,000 square feet of indoor amenities will include fitness centers, a video wall, sports lounge, business center, café, and coffee bar.

This development brings urban architecture to Blue Ash and will have quality materials throughout, including 100% brick and masonry facades. They have alternated the architectural elements throughout the project, changing rooflines to create a unique development for Blue Ash. They brought in elements from their neighbor, itelligence, and took inspiration from Summit Park and the Blue Ash Recreation Center.

Mr. Birkla said they will also be promoting economic development. They have talked to corporations in the area and have received multiple letters of support, including from Duke Realty, itelligence, Axiom, and Woolpert. The common theme in those letters is that they have young professionals who are highly educated and highly paid. This type of housing supports this corporate workforce.

Dan Johnson reminded the Commission that this item is the rezoning and the second item deals specifically with the development.

John Moores asked if the shortage of parking spaces has been addressed. Mr. Birkla said they have 1.78 spaces per unit which is more than that they normally have. They could get more parking on site; however, most of their developments are geared towards 1.5 per unit so they have the opportunity to preserve better green spaces.

David Waltz addressed parking in general noting that historically many developments have been over-parked. In recent years, the City has allowed lesser amounts of parking at a number of developments and has yet to regret it.

Jim Sumner asked the applicant what this project would look like 50 years from now and if the shift would change from rental to owner occupied and how the retail mix may change. Mr. Birkla said they build their developments with quality materials, quality design and quality construction to last 50+ years. They also carry

BLUE ASH PLANNING COMMISSION

February 6, 2014

Page 3

operating reserves to maintain the development. He noted a shift in the housing market to rental housing. He said they have targeted their property to young professionals with higher wages, who want a little more freedom and have more disposable income. He said their housing is not for everyone, but is for a lot of people who are looking for a specific lifestyle which they deliver through their amenities and services they provide on-site such as concierge services, maid services, and valet pick-up of trash and mail. Their residential units average approximately 981 square feet and the rental rates range from low to mid \$900's to \$1,700 per month. Their units are a little smaller since they try to promote living outside of their units to take advantage of all the on-site amenities for a more urban style housing choice.

In answer to a request by Jim Sumner to provide details on the non-residential part of the building, Mr. Birkla said they struggled with getting the retail component for this development due to the right turn in and right turn out at the intersection of Ilmenau Way and Reed Hartman Highway. At this time, they haven't been able to secure outside vendors, so all their amenities are for residents only.

As there were no additional questions for the applicant, Vice Chair Berry opened for public comments.

Tim Breen, CFO for itelligence, is in favor of this project. This project has also been reviewed with their board in Germany and they liked the concept. They feel this is a good use of the land and itelligence might even be interested in renting one of these apartments.

Paul Collett commented that itelligence being comfortable with the development addressed one of his prime concerns.

As there was no further comment, Vice Chair Berry closed the public hearing.

Jim Sumner is struggling with the mixed-use designation since this has such a small percentage of non-residential use.

John Berry said he is personally conflicted due to the recent attitude in the City towards apartments and if more apartments are appropriate. Paul Collett said that if the City intends to grow its residential population, there are not a whole lot of choices. He feels this development is unique, visually attractive, and appeals to the demographic we are trying to attract. He would personally welcome additional residents.

John Moores is paranoid about rentals in the City. Some of these are not aging well and there is a proliferation of temporary housing. He is not in favor of part-time residents. He has nothing against this specific development as he thinks it is a nice-looking, quality development but has a drag against any more rental property in Blue Ash. He said he is not alone in that he hears it from his neighbors and other Blue Ash friends and residents.

John Berry said many people start out in apartment living. This is geared towards young professionals just starting out in their careers, possible double income, so they have disposable income at their discretion. Having the opportunity for young professionals to move into the community and get introduced to Blue Ash, they might choose to stay. Paul Collett agrees.

February 6, 2014

Page 4

Jim Sumner finds this to be a difficult decision but he is inclined to support at this time. He said it is extremely high quality and will bring energy to the area, with its proximity to the business community. As much as he would prefer to bring in only Class A office space and fill all of Reed Hartman with it, we are not getting that investment and he thinks this may be the investment that needs to be considered.

DECISION: Paul Collett moved, Jim Sumner seconded, to recommend to Council approval of the proposed rezoning of this parcel from M-1 to M-3 Planned Office and Mixed Use District and, if approved, that the Zoning text also be amended to make the “Urban Design Corridor” regulations apply within the M-3 district to ensure consistency with the M-1 district along Reed Hartman Highway. If development of the land proposed to be rezoned has not commenced within 18 months, the zoning will revert back to the M-1 Office-Industrial District. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

**b. Reed Hartman Highway and Ilmenau Way – Anderson Birkla Investment Partners**

Planned Development approval for a multi-family development

PRESENT: Anthony Birkla – Applicant

Tony Birkla commented that the rendering does not provide much detail, but he clearly heard that quality of materials is a concern for the future longevity of their project. Dan Johnson said our Code does not include an official Concept Approval. He recommended the Commissioners provide feedback to Mr. Birkla based on the plan then table it to be reviewed at the next meeting when more detail can be provided. This would not affect the schedule since the rezoning process would not be completed until May.

Paul Collett asked about the perimeter parking and if headlights will be shielded from Reed Hartman Highway and Ilmenau Way. Mr. Birkla said they can address that. Mr. Collett also asked about on site refuse removal. Mr. Birkla said the building itself is self-contained. Any air conditioning units will sit on the roof of the building, electric meters are within the building, and refuse collection is inside of the building.

In answer to a question by John Moores, Mr. Birkla said there will be 18-24 dedicated garages along the back of the building. The development will preserve as much of the buffer as possible adjacent to the Hampton Inn.

John Berry clarified that there is nothing of particular concern with the development, but the Commissioners would like to see more detail regarding elevations, building materials, color scheme, landscaping, and lighting before recommending approval.

DECISION: Paul Collett moved, Jim Sumner seconded, to table the application. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

**BLUE ASH PLANNING COMMISSION**

**February 6, 2014**

Page 5

**ITEM 5: MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

David Waltz commented the City will be updating the Comprehensive Plan, which should also address land use. John Moores said that the City needs to reconsider the amount of land zoned for different types of uses in the process.

Jim Sumner commented that the Commission should not make decisions based on what it believes City Council wants, but on the Code and on what direction the Commission thinks the City should go.

**ITEM 6: ADJOURNMENT**

DECISION: There being no further business to be discussed, John Moores moved, Jim Sumner seconded, to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

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John Berry, Vice Chair

MINUTES RECORDED BY:

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Traci Smith