

BRVA LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, November 24, 2020 6:00 P.M.
Via Zoom

Present: Karen Valiquett, Mark Demerly, Kathy Andry, Lynn Levy, Molly Lawless Vance, Tim Oprisu, Neal Bennett, Garrett Lawton, Adam Hill, John Jackson and Janine Lawton

Guests: Keith Potts, Michael Cranfill, Mickey Shuey, Becky Erdel, Stacia Yeager, Nate Price, John Pantzer, Colby Cline, Sam Vonderau

Chairperson Karen Valiquett called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m., committee introductions were made and Karen introduced the presenters.

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting was made by Lynn Levy and seconded by Neal Bennett. Motion passed.

Meeting Notes: 927/929 Westfield Blvd. – John Pantzer, Colby Cline and Sam Vonderau with a preliminary plan and design presentation for this parcel.

John Pantzer began with background information on a previous plan for this parcel which was approved in 2016. After that plan was determined to be unfeasible, they landed on a concept they think would be a great addition to the village and would allow a corner that's been dark for 5 plus years, to have some activity on it. He turned the presentation over to Sam Vonderau and Colby Cline with the design team.

Sam Vonderau presented slides of the project and began by pointing out that this block is one of the purest blocks in Broad Ripple, from an urban design sense. It has large buildings anchoring 3 corners with an almost deteriorating corner on Westfield and Winthrop. The relationship of the site to the Monon is key. They envision this development embracing and celebrating the activity on the Monon, the small pocket park to the east and the River House development. They see the future of Broad Ripple as being more walkable and hope this project can be a catalyst to generate pedestrian activity. The bungalow house at the south end of the site is scheduled to remain. The existing 2-story building is scheduled to be removed prior to the development. They are looking at a temporary 5-to-7-year, lower entry level development using shipping containers because of their primary goal in placemaking and getting people moving to and from a site. He added that shipping containers have a level of texture and color that is interesting. They are working through concepts to make it a year-round, family-friendly amenity. It would have a variety of food service options, beverages, activities and clubs. They are proposing an outdoor courtyard concept, with a mix of program uses, and the modular shipping containers framing the active site. The design would use shade structures for the summer and tents or enclosures during the colder months, with the goal of gathering on the court. He presented the locations and uses of each of the containers and discussed the areas of landscaping in the design and the plan to widen the narrow sidewalks on the east. He talked through each of the perspective renderings. Out of respect for the other buildings in the village they want the design to be clean and inviting.

John Pantzer added that they plan to activate the site on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights to run co-ed sports leagues for adults. They currently run leagues at Broad Ripple Park and on any given day they might have 100-500 participants and 50-250 of those pour into the village to support the bars and restaurants after their events. He also sees the site as a place where they can work with the BRVA to hold fairs or other events to keep it active.

Karen asked if this would require a rezoning or variances. John said they probably will need a variance for parking. It's already zoned for artisanal food. There is a question about how they will calculate the interior square footage and what the parking requirement will be. Karen mentioned there is street parking but it doesn't appear there is any dedicated parking. John agreed. To make the concept work they need to use the entire site. They are hoping the 5 abandoned BlueIndy parking spots would be repurposed for public parking with electric charging. They see a lot of people entering this from the Monon Trail and the surrounding apartments.

Mark said he appreciates the creative thinking about this. He is concerned there is little area open to the community and especially along the east side where it is very much a solid wall. He would like to see more café or outdoor eating areas that would engage the sidewalk and would be more community active. The corner of Westfield Blvd. and Winthrop would be an opportunity to have outdoor dining, bike parking and small food trucks.

John added that each of the small sites would be an incubator type concept. They can set up in half or whole containers to test the Broad Ripple market and build a following. It will be turn-key because the containers will already be outfitted.

Lynn asked how they plan to deal with inclement weather and snow removal. She's concerned about the fact that there's no vehicular circulation or parking on this site and asked how they plan to accommodate parking the cars coming from outside of the area. She added that food industries in particular have a lot of deliveries and generate a lot of trash and she wanted to know how those would be managed. She's also inquired about the interface with the property to the west. John explained the Monkey's Tale is owned by a separate ownership group and will not be interacting. With regard to deliveries, there are currently six restaurants in that area and all deliveries are made through the alley. His office is in that area and from what he has seen, they do not stop in the streets to make deliveries. They will have an agreement to have their garbage emptied daily. There is glass recycling in the alley and any glass used on site will be recycled there. He said they run a lot of leagues in the park. Fifty to sixty percent of the people drive but they are lower impact leagues with 24-32 people coming in to play. They've incorporated a warming hut for colder weather and they will be utilizing synthetic curling courts in the colder months. They will also have outside fire concepts. Snow removal will be done with a smaller, ride-on snow remover. If they have to close the interior courtyard because of snow, they will.

Lynn asked about hours of operation. John said it'll have designated hours of operation. They don't expect it to be open past 1:30 in the evening. They don't want to be a late-night place. They would probably be closed by 11:30 during the week. They can close it off with the fencing down one side.

Molly asked if the upstairs would be open, with modifications, in the winter. John said they've discussed putting in curtains but they haven't developed it further. She said she really likes it.

John Jackson said he loves the concept. He asked if the shipping containers are used or new containers purchased for this project. He spoke about durability and life expectancy of used shipping containers. He expressed concerns about trash. Sam said they've engaged a modular construction company who has experience in optimizing the construction of containers and reusing them. John Pantzer said they've spoken with their fabricator and these would be single-time, used containers. They will be durable and their lifespan will be commensurate with the length of the project.

John Pantzer added that the repurposed bungalow will have a large outdoor patio dining area that faces the Monon.

Colby Cline commented regarding the street wall. They looked at the ability of trying to pull through from the pocket park, but because the cross walks are so close together on both sides of Broad Ripple Ave. and over to Westfield, it seemed impractical and likely wouldn't be successful.

Additional modifications to make the site more pedestrian friendly and provide more community engagement were discussed.

Kathy added that she liked the idea but is also worried about the trash.

Garrett said he loves the concept. He agreed with the other comments about seeing more interaction with the street outside. He thinks they'll get the trash issue sorted out. He's anxious to see the changes made based on the comments.

Adam said he likes the project a lot. He asked where the take-out drivers will park. John said it's something they'll have to address. He doesn't believe the smaller concepts will support a large carry out operation. They will do some research on this. The larger restaurant probably wouldn't be large enough to support that either. Adam added he also would like to see them make the east side more welcoming. John indicated that one of the reasons it's not more open is to contain the sound so it doesn't flow out to River House. The owner had concerns over sound issues.

Karen said she was excited to see some movement on this corner. She said it's a great concept. She asked for comments from the community members in attendance.

Michael Cranfill, owner of Cholita, said he sees this as the biggest game changer for the rebranding of Broad Ripple. It will allow Broad Ripple to compete with Mass Ave. and Fountain Square and give it an edge. He thinks it's very inviting and will create more street activity.

Nate Price asked why it's not 3 or 4 stories. Sam said this needs to be a low barrier to entry for development and it needs to keep the rates accessible to keep it all activated. They also want it to be less upfront and be respectful of the surrounding property owners and have the identity of the space be revealed on the interior.

Additional comments of support for the project, were made by the community members present.

Karen asked what the next steps will be. John said they wanted to get feedback from the committee first. They will reflect on the comments from the meeting and then go to the city regarding any rezoning or variances they may need. They will implement any comments from the city and then come back to the committee, possibly in January.

Karen thanked everyone for coming and confirmed the date of the January meeting.

Tim Oprisu moved to adjourn the meeting. Neal Bennett seconded. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 pm.