

Lorigan/Sapphire Townhouses  
Development Activities Meeting  
January 6, 2022  
Notes taken by Christina Howell

Presenter(s):

BDC Staff: Christina Howell, Sam Spearing

Splitrock Real Estate Partners development team: Jonathan Kamin, lawyer for developer;  
Brytten Cook, developer; Chris Richardson, engineer; Alan Dunn, architect

Sam Spearing, facilitator

Attendees: 16 Zoom attendees

-Attendees are joining as muted, only the host can unmute

### **Section I: Presentation from Development Team Sapphire Way Townhomes**

Jon Kamin

- Building by right, do not need variances or exceptions
- Calling the project the Sapphire Way Project
  - Includes renovation of the former Italian club
- Current site is blighted, vacant and overgrown
  - Some parking by community members on site
- R2-VH zoning district
- Townhouses and garages will front on Sapphire Way
  - 5 foot setbacks in front
  - Subdividing lots to create 4 separate parcels in order to make the attached homes single family owner occupied
  - 2 cars to be parked on 2 side units, 1 car parked in the 2 interior units
    - Curb cuts exist along the entire front of the 4 parcels
    - Adding pedestrian access easement, pushing the buildings back from the street
    - Restoring sidewalk along the front of the building
  - 1st floor open concept
  - 15 foot rear yard

### **Section II: Answers to Questions from Community Attendees**

- For sale units, not rental
  - Approximate sale price of \$450,000-\$499,000
- Construction will start after permit received, completed within 6 months
  - Begin late spring perhaps early summer
- Context surrounding the development
  - Lot is at the corner of Lorigan and Sapphire
  - Garages exist fronting below Lorigan Street
  - No access to the property via the rear and not planning to have any
  - Elevation change between Lorigan and the site
  - Holding 15 ft setback in the rear as well
- Width of the lots and thinking about 1 vs. 2 car parking
  - Corner lots are 22 feet wide, interior lots are 19.5 feet wide

- The smaller units don't allow for 2-cars, not wide enough
- Units are essentially 3 stories, 1st floor is a ground floor that holds the garage with a room behind it to be used flexibly
- Building within the height restrictions
- Where are the entrances to the end units?
  - Both will be on the side towards the rear of the units, access through the side yard
- Site shows drop off at Lorigan, units will follow grade of Sapphire
  - Site will have a wall on Lorigan
  - Will cut back into the hillside
  - Keeping wall on Lorigan, will test structural integrity of the wall
- 3 bedrooms planned currently

### **Section III: Presentation from Development Team Former Italian Club**

- Directly across the street from the townhouse site at the opposite corner of Lorigan and Sapphire
- Changing it from a non-conforming use of a club to a 2-unit building
- For sale side by side townhouses created within the existing structure
  - No change to exterior structure or dimensions]
  - Significant change in appearance planned
  - 3 story within height code
- No integral parking
- Entry on ground floor with storage and other flexible use
  - 1st floor open concept
  - 2nd floor having 2 bedrooms
- Entry for one unit on Sapphire way, the other on Lorigan in roughly the places where they exist currently

### **Section II: Answers to Questions from Community Attendees**

- Number of bedrooms could be subject to change, currently planning on 2
- Ideally same price point but may be less around \$401,000-\$450,000
- Next door on Lorigan is a cinderblock building that is used as a home
- Parking for these units would be across the street, have purchased currently empty lot
  - Lot goes between Lorigan and Juniper
  - Surface lot, currently used for parking by nearby residents
  - One entrance off of Lorigan, one curb cut off of Juniper, parking for 2 cars side by side stacked to fit 4 cars total
- Sapphire Way homes will be separate townhouses, single family attached
- The Italian Club would be set up as owner-occupied condo because there are more shared issues to deal with such as roof, walls, etc.
  - Trash collection/access will be city, no commercial hauler
  - Ground floor has mechanical room that isn't finished completely and envisioning garbage collection taking place there
- Fence along building with 3 feet between - that 3 feet is the property of the next door neighbor - building is built up to property lines on all sides
- Garden on Lorigan will not be affected by construction, that lot is owned by a neighbor
- Construction can probably start earlier than townhouses because it's a renovation because it requires less in the way of permits, hopefully as soon as possible

- Will need to put new utilities into Sapphire Way
  - Open roads to work, then cover with steel plate to keep road open when not working
  - Not a one way, 2-way street
- Landscaping
  - No area for landscaping at Italian Club
  - Parking lot and new townhomes will have landscaping
  - Along Lorigan there will be 3 tree pits and trees added
  - Some trees will have to be removed on Sapphire Way including overgrown weeds/shrubs for the townhouses, no trees of significance or that are older (there is a mulberry tree noted by 2 attendees)
  - 15-foot rear yard will allow for trees, city has requirements on replacing trees that are cut down and they will comply with that
- Facade design/materials
  - Italian Club: cube, windows random to each other, “playful composition” of windows, thinking of it “as an art object”
  - Want to stick with something that looks like it belongs
    - Like the look of brick, not too modern cladding/siding
- Building is empty, no garbage remaining, have been monitoring for pests
- Brytten will be the direct contact for any construction issues that impact neighbors

### Chat Log

00:22:29 Cassandra Masters: Can you repeat which street the garages are along?  
 00:22:50 Sidney Cannon-Bailey: What is the estimated rental rate of these apartments?  
 00:22:55 Melissa Ciccocioppo: Approximately how long will construction take?  
 00:23:57 Melissa Ciccocioppo: And when will construction begin?  
 00:47:35 Maura Bainbridge: are these at the same price point?  
 00:47:46 Melissa Ciccocioppo: What is the building directly next to this on Lorigan?  
 00:48:27 Jennifer Bradford: Where is the parking for the Italian club properties?  
 00:52:33 Melissa Ciccocioppo: Just to be 100% clear, the parking lot won't take up the existing green space at all? I know the woman that lives in that building that uses that space as a very nice garden.  
 00:53:57 Sidney Cannon-Bailey: Will construction for the Italian club units start at the same time as the townhouses?  
 00:58:56 Jennifer Lucchino: Are there any trees that will be removed for the Sapphire St. development?  
 01:07:19 TERRA MERKEY: There's a pretty large mulberry tree  
 01:07:20 Melissa Ciccocioppo: There's definitely a mulberry tree there.  
 01:11:19 Jennifer Bradford: We have a huge problem, too. Thank you for speaking on it.

### Section IV: Post-Developer, Community Conversation

The developers do not require a variance or special exception, therefore there is little leverage for the community to ask for major design changes.

Single family uses - garage entrances zoning change last year to not allow garage entrances, legislation leaves the door open for garages from the front on alleys, as well as if the lot is less than 2500 square feet, and if there is no other way to add parking to the units. The legislation also gives some leeway to the zoning administrator in these cases.

Resident who lives very nearby doesn't have an issue with garages, but has a problem with the current maintenance. Need to have brush cleared and all properties baited for rats. Rats were inside before they cleared the property out and the neighbors did not have an infestation until dumpsters for the Italian Club arrived and work began. Parking won't be much of an issue because they have off street and garages.

On Lorigan a block up from the properties, parking is very much an issue, lot on Lorigan currently used by residents for parking  
BDC responded that the developers do own the parcel so any neighbors parking on that lot are doing so with or without permission currently, likely without permission.

Would like to see a 2nd meeting before construction when plans are further along to understand facade materials and design, landscaping, construction schedule etc. Several attendees agreed with this community member.

Who keeps track of the size of the trees? The Zoning department will look at developer plans for tree sizes and city forester may take a look in person as well. Concerns can be brought up to zoning staff.

Price range - don't want to see houses completely out of the price range of current residents. Overheard conversation of a person bragging that they are buying up buildings on Liberty Avenue and turning the apartments into AirBNB and how much they can make. Pittsburgh and Bloomfield have a real problem with this. More are popping up all over the neighborhood. Other municipalities address short term rentals in their zoning code but Pittsburgh does not. Concerned that the owners of these properties could turn around and rent them out as airbnbs.

#### **Follow up requests for the developer**

- Bait the two Sapphire Way-facing sites
- Immediately clean up all weeds and brush
- Sales agreement addendum that the properties may not be used as a short term rental for a period of X years

#### **Follow up for BDC**

- Make requests of developer and report back to community
- BDC to discuss and advocate for potential future AirBNB zoning code with zoning administrator, city council, and other community organizations - need to find examples of other cities' legislation