

Blessed Sacrament Community Advisory Group
October 10, 2006
Meeting Notes

CAC Members Present: Carmen Velazquez, Damaris Pimentel, Ashley Cotton, Silvia Villar, Rafael Benzan, Michael Reiskind, Jennifer Spencer, Clara Garcia, **BRA:** Ines Soto, Michael Cannizzo, Jon Greeley

BCDC Debrief: Ines Soto (BRA) called the meeting to order and asked for CAC feedback on the BCDC hearing.

Clara Garcia (CAC) stated a number of topics covered in the BCDC meeting, including the BCDC site visit and the parking lot. She mentioned that the developer made a presentation of project changes to the commission. There were a number of community questions, including why the parish house (rectory) was being moved. It should also be noted that BCDC suggested that individual comments on the project should be directed to the developers and not BCDC. She related two community comments, the first being that too much is going on in the complex, that there is a need for more green space, and that the Church still needs to be seen from far away. The second was an area resident who liked the project.

Carmen Velazquez (CAC) asked about the Creighton Street Condo design.

Michael Cannizzo (BRA) replied that the development team is working on it. The redesign, at the behest of BCDC/BLC, had a flat roof and was all brick. It looked too commercial and the old design was preferred. The development team continues to work on the detail of the building.

Rafael Benzan (CAC) asked if it would have a brick façade. Michael (BRA) replied that it would likely be wood clabbered to match the neighborhood.

Michael Reiskind (CAC) asked about the mixed-use building and the materials that would be used. Clara (CAC) replied that those details would continue to be worked out with the BRA and BLC.

Michael (BRA) stated that there has been some concern that the design of that building is not further along, but that is a product of the BLC and BCDC input. The building has been simplified and the development team is now working on materials and the corner.

Ines (BRA) stated that this is the CAC's 12th meeting to date. She urged each CAC member to look at the meeting summaries attached to the meeting notes and make any necessary additions. Also, the notes are now available on the BRA's website and this summary document will be posted there when finalized as well. The deadline for changes is Friday, 10/13. Looking back, we have accomplished a lot, but we are not done. Through Article 80, the CAC will work with the BRA until the project is approved by the BRA Board, and afterward as needed. Carmen's questions were part of the CAC letter.

The CAC will get the responses by the development team for more information when it is available.

Damaris Pimentel (CAC) felt this would be a good time to debrief on Carmen's questions. Clara (CAC) agreed. The remaining issues need to be clarified and the CAC needs to be able to make a unified statement.

Carmen (CAC) stated that her first issue with the project was density. The Sunnyside Neighborhood Association (SNA) believes that as constituted, the project is too dense. Carmen provided a handout of calculations completed by SNA of the area within a 1-mile radius of the site. They calculate that there are 130 people per acre on the project and 39 units per acre.

Damaris (CAC) asked for clarification.

Carmen (CAC) responded that her problem is how the developer determined what area to analyze for density. The density of the project is high for JP where development averages 26 units per acre. The proposed development is too high.

Michael (CAC) asked what the density was for St. Mark's? This would seem to be the densest part of the neighborhood.

Michael (BRA) held up a map displaying the area used by the development team for analysis.

Michael (CAC) stated that Sunnyside is single-family homes, but other parts of the community are much denser, like St Mark's. The site is in between both denser and less dense parts of JP.

Carmen (CAC) reiterated that she represents this area. Michael (CAC) replied that he understood that but felt that there is a middle ground there.

Rafael (CAC) stated that the CAC has to be fair. You cannot look at just one neighborhood and a 1-block radius around the campus. The larger neighborhood needs to be examined. The middle ground needs to be found because someone will always be upset. Also, the mixed-use building is only 4 stories, which is currently found in the neighborhood.

Damaris (CAC) felt that the numbers presented represented the highest possible capacity and that is not necessarily the case.

Carmen (CAC) responded that the development team looked at high capacity number when completing their own analysis.

Jennifer Spencer (CAC) stated that the development team used the specific are for the study because there was available census data to pull from.

Rafael (CAC) stated that the density would not be the highest in every case.

Carmen (CAC) stated that there would be 118 units on 3.1 acres as well as the professional building and the school. That will be a lot of people.

Jennifer (CAC) stated that across from her home there is a 3.5 story building and the problem is not the number of people, but the management of those people. Issues such as traffic and parking concern her more than density. The JPNDP has pledged to address this. She is comfortable with the density of the project.

Clara (CAC) stated other housing projects in JP need to be looked at as well. There are lots of units going up.

Rafael (CAC) stated that in general, city living has some congestion as people try to maximize available space. This project has the opportunity to do more stuff to our liking. Traffic issues exist everywhere in the city. The developers have listened and made changes. Residents need to be flexible.

Damaris (CAC) asked how Carmen felt as a CAC member regarding the SNA suggestions.

Carmen (CAC) stated that people talk about community benefits, but where is the benefit for her neighborhood? This project is in her backyard and she will have more traffic. How flexible do we have to be? This is too much!

Damaris (CAC) stated that if a large developer, and not a NDC, had bought the property, this would be a different game. It takes teamwork to make the project the best possible project.

Carmen (CAC) stated that the Church would have been preserved regardless.

Damaris (CAC) replied that this project has been very available to the community. She again urged developing the best project possible.

Carmen (CAC) agreed and said we should find a happy medium.

Ines (CAC) stated that her impression was that the corner mixed-use building had been the CAC's biggest concern, not the overall number of units.

Clara (CAC) stated that we need to be careful. She asked about the project's funding sources. How would changing the number of units affect this?

Ines (CAC) stated that was what they have told the BRA. The need that number of units to make this project work.

Clara (CAC) stated that we do not want to end up in a situation where no one likes the outcome.

Carmen (CAC) stated that she had questions about project phasing. If the SRO/Convent is to be done first, how much money will be made on this portion? The team has stated that they need \$2 million; I would like to see that money. What about the 4 condos in the Church?

Jennifer (CAC) stated that she felt that the CAC had the necessary info on this. The development team provided the range of sale prices for the units. The CAC has as much info as the developer has.

Rafael (CAC) stated that the developer has provided as much info as possible. Why is the money important?

Carmen (CAC) replied that in relation to the 4 affordable Church units, what is the profit margin on the non-affordable units?

Michael (BRA) stated that the NDC is a non-profit. Damaris (CAC) replied that their partner, New Atlantic Development, would make money.

Rafael (CAC) asked why it mattered if they made a profit. By providing affordable housing, the community will benefit.

Carmen (CAC) stated that they could use the difference to pay for the Church units.

Rafael (CAC) stated that the last he had heard, the affordable units were still on the table.

Jennifer (CAC) added that the issue was included in the letter. This is two different issues, density and affordability.

Ines (BRA) stated that the development team would respond to the issues, so let's wait to see how they handle that. Michael (BRA) added the development team has to respond to the city and community comments. The response is then reviewed. Obviously, the CAC wants the 4 Church units.

Ines (BRA) stated that the CAC needs to have confidence moving forward.

Jennifer (CAC) stated that the Zoning Committee meeting is two days from now and the CAC needs some kind of consensus.

Ines (BRA) replied that this was a good point. The Zoning Committee has not met to discuss the project, so they are behind despite the September 5th presentation. They will meet on 10/12 and felt that the 9/5 meeting was inadequate. As a result the development team will present again. The BRA is may not attend and it is an open public meeting.

The map amendment will be discussed. The CAC needs to be ok with their vote on the project zoning.

Carmen (CAC) stated that the Zoning Committee are experts on zoning.

Ines (BRA) stated that if the Zoning Committee meeting goes well, the project could possibly voted on at the public meeting on 10/17. Is this enough time? The information has been out there for a while. If there are still issues, they can be discussed at the 10/17 meeting.

Michael (CAC) stated that he Zoning Committee would ask the developers to leaflet the neighborhood. That has not happened for the 10/12 meeting. Thus, the 10/17 meeting is the public meeting. The Neighborhood Council would want the public present for a vote.

Michael (CAC) was unsure about what the remaining issues were. He did see the value in having the Zoning Committee vote before the 10/17 meeting.

Ines (BRA) stated that it was important for the CAC to be on the same page and that the CAC work is not done. Also, if the Zoning Committee needs to meet again, then the Neighborhood Council would meet and vote in November.

Rafael (CAC) asked what the zoning vote was for. Ines (BRA) replied that this has come up in debate. Clara and Jennifer felt that the vote included in the notes was stated correctly.

Rafael (CAC) asked if the Zoning Committee would move based on the recommendation?

Damaris (CAC) replied that the CAC gave their ok to move on to the Zoning Committee. The CAC preferred the map amendment to variances.

Michael (CAC) stated that the Zoning Committee would consider the opinions of community groups in the neighborhood. In this instance, the CAC would likely be that group.

Damaris (CAC) liked how the CAC voted. Ines (BRA) stated that she would email the information out about Thursdays meeting. Rafael (CAC) suggested one person speak for the CAC.

Damaris (CAC) suggested Michael for Tuesday. Ines (CAC) asked if everyone was ok with this. Michael (CAC) replied that there was no conflict here because he is on the CAC to represent the Neighborhood Council.