

Multnomah Village Apartments

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planners," she added.

Developer Tim O'Brien of Urban Asset Advisors, and Kurt Schultz of SERA Architects, Inc. took the floor.

O'Brien grew up in Multnomah Village. Because he has such ties to the neighborhood, he said his goal is to consider the feedback, close on the property and make a beautiful building.

Standing by large boards depicting drawings and layout of the building, O'Brien reminded the crowd that they didn't have to be there.

"We wanted to come so you could influence us. We want to build something that is an asset to the village," he said.

O'Brien explained the property is zoned Commercial Storefront (CS), which allows him to build 45 feet high (four stories) with an unlimited amount of square footage.

"They encourage you to build right up to the street edge," he added. "But that is not what we are proposing, even though we are within our rights to do so."

The CS zone is, however, intended to "preserve and enhance older commercial areas with a storefront character," and that new development is compatible "with this desired character."

In addition, the lots are in a design overlay zone, to ensure that infill development "will be compatible with the neighborhood and enhance the area."

O'Brien stressed they designed the apartment building to appear less "monolithic" by placing a small courtyard space out front. Large windows and balconies will also break up the impression of "mass," he assured the crowd.

The city code calls for .33 parking

stalls per unit but O'Brien said they were going to build 43 parking spaces for the 70 units.

When some expressed skepticism that 27 future renters would be carless, O'Brien replied they were "doing the best they could."

During public comments, attendees were mostly concerned about the height, saying a four-story building just "didn't fit" in the village.

Bernie Bonn collected 414 signatures in just four days to oppose the project. The petition reads: "We urge the City Council to protect this priceless and historic (100-year old) neighborhood of Portland by limiting buildings to no more than 3 stories and requiring residential development to provide parking at a level of 1 space per unit."

"I heard the same sentiments over and over again from signers," Bonn said. "Four stories is too high. The parking is already bad. Thinking that people in Multnomah won't own a car is unrealistic, even if people ride a bike to work. Adding more cars without parking will make it a nightmare."

Many agreed, including Stewart Rounds. "Four stories does seem a little big for what I still consider to be a small town in the middle of the big city," said Rounds.

"I would encourage you to please consider (building) a little shorter. Four stories seems a little tall to me. Three seems more livable."

Rounds has more than 700 signatures on his online petition asking the city to restrict apartment buildings in the Village to three stories, and require one parking place per unit.

Suzanne Lehman called the design "gorgeous," but also begged O'Brien to change the height. "We're not saying, 'don't develop in our precious community,' we're saying, 'develop, but make it livable.'"

Steven Kovacks agreed. "I think it

should be developed, and the current property is underutilized as is," he said. "But it really is not a good fit for the village."

There were supporters. Chris Dearth said he was in favor of change and diversity. "If we want diversity and opportunities for our children and elderly people in our village, we need developments like this," he said. "This is a positive thing for our village."

Mike Ashland said because of the Urban Growth Boundary, the city needs to support infill.

"I think that we don't want our farmland and forestland eaten up with housing," Ashland said. "And unless we put up bigger places, we're not going to make any progress with this."

Following comments, Bill Kielhorn made a motion that the Multnomah Neighborhood Association oppose any development higher than three stories, or 37 feet tall in Multnomah Village along Capitol Highway from the viaduct over Multnomah Boulevard to Miles Street.

Some objected to voting on the motion with just five minutes left in the meeting, and little time for discussion. One person questioned the point when the zoning allows O'Brien to build four stories anyway.

Sucec reminded people that because of the design overlay, development must be in character of, and compatible with the tone of the neighborhood.

The motion passed with 36 ayes, 9 nays and 8 abstaining.

O'Brien said he was a little disappointed with the vote, and although he would continue to work on the design, he was immovable on four stories.

As for the idea that it would "stick out" in the village? "I hope it sticks out. It's supposed to be a beautiful project that does stick out," O'Brien said. "It's a marquee property in a marquee location. It's intended to be that. So, yeah, it should have an impact. It should have a positive impact."

OPEN FORUM

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and Capitol Highway. Anybody thought through what this means?

Further, there will likely be increased traffic on 33rd Place and the surrounding area with increased traffic on 33rd Avenue to gain access to the new building, either from residents or customers of any new commercial shops.

Finally, if any of you ever decide to walk along 33rd Avenue after 3:30 p.m. or thereafter, you are going to see a number of adults, children and teens who live in the area (who are returning from school or work) and/or who use the bus stop at 33rd Avenue and Capitol Highway and must walk on the street.

Once we have increased traffic on the

streets, and all the parking spaces are taken up in my neighborhood, where are these folks going to walk?

Assuming that development will occur, I would invite all of you, both pro and con, to at least remain civil and work to promote development that helps the Village stay the Village, and doesn't impact the surrounding neighborhood as much as it could.

Editor's Note: Michael Banks lives in Multnomah Village. A four-story, 71-unit apartment building has been proposed for a site on the corner of Southwest 33rd Avenue and Capitol Highway. For more on this subject, read KC Cowan's story on Page 1. The Post welcomes reader response. Letters are welcome up to 300 words and guest columns up to 500 words. Contact information can be found on Page 2.

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