

# East Lawrence Neighborhood Association

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To the Lawrence City Commission and Historic Resources Commission

The East Lawrence Neighborhood Association is offering our thoughts on the proposed development at 800 Pennsylvania Street by the developer Tony Krsnch as presented to us by Patrick Watkins. Patrick has come to at least 4 meetings to share the project with us. This development coupled with the one proposed at 9<sup>th</sup> and Delaware street will have a major impact – both good and bad – on the surrounding area.

## Pros

1. Communication: This development group has reached out multiple times to keep the neighborhood informed of the project's progress and we appreciate that.
2. Design Guidelines: the architectural design mostly conforms to the area guidelines (Warehouse Arts District/8<sup>th</sup> & Pennsylvania Design Guidelines and Horizon 2020). This is a warehouse district and their design drawings reflect it. We hope any minimal changes to the design continue to conform to the Guidelines. These design guidelines were carefully developed by neighborhood residents, businesses and the city to ensure a positive outcome to the associated district in such close proximity to a residential neighborhood.
3. Height: About half of the building is 3 stories tall, again conforming to district guidelines and recognizing the historically designated properties in the environs. The building rises to 4 stories on the North end, which is a change to the design guidelines. This is a trade-off for the density to allow for more affordability. It does remain shorter than the Poehler building which must remain the tallest building in the district per district guidelines.
4. Affordable Housing: 100% of the 47 of the purely residential units will be affordable for at least 30 years. The 7 work/live units on the 1st floor will have a commercial component to them, so they will be market rate. Income averaging will allow many units to be designated for tenants who qualify at the lower income levels, where their rental rate will match the affordability requirements for their income level. One unit will be reserved as transitional housing for the homeless as required of all properties receiving affordable housing tax credits. The Developer did research about the feasibility of permanent affordable housing, but current programs do not subsidize permanent affordability. The KS Housing Resources Corporation expressed that permanent affordability is unreasonable for LIHTC projects, and the 30 year terms is designed for lifespan of a typical LIHTC building. They further note that after 30 years, buildings need refurbishment and reinvestment. Tax credits with its associated affordable clauses could be applied for again after the 30 year term, if additional affordability is desirable for the area.
5. Work Force Housing: This project is designed in part to fill a well-documented need in the City's housing study, for non-student renters who are a part of the work force.
6. Sound Insulation: This project calls for significant landscaping (trees, shrubs, and a low fence) to be placed along the New Jersey/Pennsylvania alley to screen light and sound. The building itself should also help insulate the neighboring homes from the sounds of the activities along Pennsylvania Street.
7. Outdoor amenities on the roof (potential rooftop gardens) will help alleviate the loss of green space within the development area.

## Cons

1. Density: We want to remind everyone again, increased density is being proposed for areas east of Mass. East Lawrence (part of the original town site) already has small lots – typically 50 ft wide. It is currently one of the densest neighborhoods in Lawrence. The additional density this development brings offers no transition to

the residences to the west and will have a stark impact on those residences. We would prefer transitions between residential zoning and multi-story buildings in these types of developments. We look forward to projects soon that ask for increased density west of Mass and even west of Iowa.

2. Parking: Yes, this is not really a problem that is created or solved by one property owner. This has been an area problem since Cider Gallery opened for events. For this area to be viable for businesses, there must be adequate parking. The City needs to continue to regulate parking requirements to accomplish those solutions, and property owners and businesses should encourage solutions to that problem. Without good solutions to parking issues surrounding streets become clogged with parking similar to areas closer to downtown. Renters in the apartments should have a reasonable expectation that they will be able to park in close proximity to their homes no matter what time they arrive home. The current plan removes parking that has been enjoyed by the businesses with parking for tenants. That increased overflow parking will move into the surrounding residential neighborhoods. No one wants the surrounding street parking to become consumed by the evening traffic of the businesses along Pennsylvania ST.

4. Affordable Housing: This is guaranteed for 30 years. That is a long time, but we would rather see permanent affordable housing.

5. Work Force Housing: The Neighborhood wants and needs to keep New York Elementary a growing school. This project does not appear to appeal to those with small children.

6. Housing in General: This development makes neighboring residences less desirable to families. Hobbs Park is a popular walking destination for many including families with small children and the increased traffic to that one block area makes it more difficult to cross 9<sup>th</sup> street and Delaware Streets in particular. 8<sup>th</sup> street will soon become more heavily travelled. A traffic study should be included with this project to help find solutions for those pedestrians and bicyclists who are already there and also for future pedestrians.

7. Environmental issues: This project will reduce the quality of life for the neighborhood residents to the west. There will be no morning sun. There needs to be a transition to multi-story apartments across the alley from residential housing anywhere they are built. HVAC systems on the rooftop should be appropriately chosen for their reduced decibel characteristics and sited to further reduce their noise impact to those who live across the alleys. New buildings downtown have done a reasonable job of reducing that impact and should be utilized here. Rooftop Gardens and other rooftop amenities should be built giving thought to encourage quiet use with awareness of how sound travels from higher locations.

There are not easy solutions to the issues that this development will bring. On the one hand it is furthering City goals for additional affordable housing, increasing the viability of the District, and reasonably following the planning standards that were adopted for this District. On the other hand this development will make walkability more difficult, increase already tough parking issues, and negatively impact the quality of life of surrounding neighbors who have worked hard to create an environment that allowed this District to thrive. That success becomes their downfall.

We realize that amongst our Board we will not come to consensus on the desirability of this project, and so we have agreed to try and note the Pros and Cons for those who would decide the fate of this project. We hope that we will have an impact on that decision.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input,

Sincerely,

The Board of the East Lawrence Neighborhood Assn

Phil Collison, President

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