



January 27, 2023

Attn: Zoning Board of Adjustment  
City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning  
200 Ross St., Third Floor  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

**Re: Zone Case 294 of 2022, 5303 Butler St**

Dear Esteemed Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment:

On behalf of Lawrenceville United and Lawrenceville Corporation, we write today in conditional support of the variance sought by Albion Development for Zone Case 294 of 2022 (5303 Butler Street).

Lawrenceville United's (LU) mission is to improve and protect the quality of life for all Lawrenceville residents. Lawrenceville Corporation (LC) serves as a conduit for responsible and sustainable growth in the Lawrenceville community. Together, we have created a community process that provides a forum where proposed development projects can be discussed, vetted, and measured against community plans and priorities. This process enables the local community organizations to identify priority issues that will help guide conversations with the developer and/or business through the planning and construction processes.

LU and LC initially met with Albion Development in May 2022. We hosted a small group meeting with historic preservationist groups with ties to Lawrenceville and Albion Development on July 13, 2022 to dialogue around the treatment of the historic fire station building. A public, open community meeting was hosted on November 15, 2022 in which Albion Development presented their plans for the site to the broader community.

Overall, Albion Development's plans have been received quite positively by the community. A wide majority of responses from our "follow up form" selected that they supported the project. Community members were pleased to see redevelopment on mostly vacant land that will help to connect the Upper Lawrenceville business district, which continues to be the section of Lawrenceville experiencing the highest rates of commercial vacancy. Community members also expressed support that this project will bring 30 much-needed affordable units to Upper Lawrenceville, and that Albion Development has committed to going beyond the inclusionary zoning requirements to accept Housing Choice Vouchers at a time when so Housing Choice Voucher tenants have disproportionately been harmed by displacement from Lawrenceville. The Lawrenceville community was also pleased that Albion will be opening some of their amenities to the community, including the dog park and the lobby and plaza areas.

Added vehicular traffic and circulation were the largest concerns raised by community members at a stretch that's already unsafe for pedestrians, but community members have appreciated Albion Development's incorporation of the Butler Street Design Guidelines into their plans, which includes

significant pedestrian improvements along Butler Street as well as a new bus shelter, as well as Albion's commitment to open Berlin Way to pedestrians and bikers while limiting vehicular traffic.

The impact of construction on the adjacent Persad Center, a non-profit that provides very important health services to the community, was also a concern that came up in our community process. Albion Development has pledged to work with LU, LC, and the Persad Center to support the Persad Center's ability to continue offering its services through the construction phases.

Some community members expressed concerns about the height and scale of the proposed building based on the context of Butler Street and the possible impact to nearby stakeholders on sunlight and views. However, there were also many community members who expressed support for the density of the project, citing the region's need for housing (especially affordable housing), the addition of new residents to support our small business community, and the environmental benefits of denser housing.

LU and LC agree with Albion Development that the current massing configuration of the proposed buildings (spread across two zones that have very different height restrictions) is preferable over a massing that strictly complies with the zoning code and creates two heavily mismatched buildings, whose negative impacts to the community in terms of context, design, and views would be more severe than what is proposed here. Consequently, we are partial to their argument that a hardship exists and we're supportive of their height variance request, subject to the following conditions:

- All eligible housing units, and minimally, all inclusionary units, will accept Housing Choice Vouchers.
- The development will comply with the guidelines outlined in the Butler Street Design Guidelines plan, including installation of bump outs at Butler/McCandless & Butler/53<sup>rd</sup> and a bus shelter.
- The dog park will be made accessible to the public during the hours that it's open, and signs will be created to indicate this.
- Albion Development will work with LU and LC to establish a construction mitigation plan prior to construction to minimize disruptions to the Persad Center and other stakeholders.

We request that the Zoning Board of Adjustment attach these conditions to their zoning approval.

We thank the ZBA for its consideration, and we thank Albion Development and their team for participating in our community process and being highly responsive throughout.

Sincerely,



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