

Public Comments regarding the rezoning of the UPMC Lancaster/St. Joseph's Hospital site submitted in writing to Lancaster City Council prior to the August 11, 2020 meeting of City Council.

Amy Ruffo, North West End Avenue

I fully support this development - assuming 30% is low income housing in the 200-800 a month range as stated in newspaper.

Additionally, if developers are unable to get tax credits I do not want the city to forfeit a mixed income development. The goal should be for 30% low income.

I am not concerned about traffic or parking.

Amy Spellman, College Avenue

I am a neighbor of the site and very much approve of and am excited for the redevelopment of the old hospital site as mixed use/mixed income for our neighborhood. I think the potential for businesses to come to this section of our city is exciting and could truly change the flow and feel of our area for the better. I also am in huge support of the affordable housing proposed. Full disclosure that I am employed with HDC MidAtlantic and know the genuine care and concern they have developed their plans with. And as a resident who values racial equity, diversity, and inclusion within my community, I think the need for affordable housing in our city - specifically on the west end of town-- can't be overstated. There exists a fundamental human right to housing upon which access to so many other rights are based and this project will create supply for a demand that far outpaces the creation of accessible housing in Lancaster City.

Anabel Proffitt, Wisdom's Table at St. Peter's United Church of Christ, Buchanan Avenue

As a pastor serving in this West End Neighborhood I want to register my enthusiastic support for a development plan that includes a significant number of low-income housing units. I like the mixed use concept and the mixing of different income levels in the new partnership project.

Bridget Holden, West Walnut Street

My name is Bridget Holden, I live in the 900 block of West Walnut Street. My family and I support the rezoning, Administration Bill No. 08-2020, amending the City of Lancaster Zoning Ordinance to rezone property located on College Avenue from HC (Hospital Complex) to MU (Mixed Use).

Our community will not see another hospital on this site. While these two organizations offer us solid ideas for the area nothing can move forward until we change the zoning.

David and Kathy Noll, West Walnut Street

As residents of the 800 block of West Walnut Street, we are fully supportive of the change in zoning from hospital based to mixed use for the UPMC property in question. A small number of folks have opposed this change on the grounds that the city needs health care services such as hospital inpatient beds and desire that the zoning remain the same. While additional health care services especially for lower income residents may be needed, clearly three organizations, two non-profit and one for profit have been unable to successfully find a financial model to operate a hospital at this location. Not surprisingly, this history indicates the overwhelming challenge for another system to convert the current site into an operational hospital.

Much has been stated about the need for affordable housing in this community, and this site lends itself well to that type of development. In our opinion, it is difficult to successfully find developers with the financial resources and the vision to transform a property like this into a finished project that benefits the

community. At the very least the zoning change must occur for that to happen, which is why we are in favor of this zoning change. The recent plan while not necessarily meeting all expectations, does in fact provide for the housing, office, and retail space that meets the diverse needs of the neighborhood. Please do not allow a small vocal outspoken group that does not provide an alternative plan for health care redevelopment but simply protests the current transition to mixed use to deter you from moving forward with rezoning.

You have a reasonable plan with a vision of what can occur, a difficult achievement for a project this size. We respectfully request that you proceed immediately with rezoning to allow this (or alternative mixed use plans) consideration to repurpose this location lest it become a very large abandoned building blight in the neighborhood.

Eric Hoover, College Avenue

I'm writing to express my support for the proposed redevelopment of the former hospital site on College Ave, one block from my home. The elements of the proposal that I am particularly excited about include the building of affordable housing units, which we sorely need in Lancaster, support of locally owned businesses in the retail spaces, and prioritizing green and sustainable building practices. I trust HDC and support their leadership in the project.

Janet Dick, Virginia Avenue

As a resident for almost thirty years in the neighborhood, I am supportive of the mixed-use proposal that has been outlined for this unique property in the northwest quadrant of the city. I am particularly excited by HDC MidAtlantic developing affordable housing opportunities. As a social worker, I am fully aware of the significant need for reasonable rent for hard-working people who struggle to make ends meet at low paying jobs. In fact, I wish HDC could develop a higher number but what is proposed is at least more than Lancaster has been able to develop in many years. I urge the council to strongly support the rezoning request so this new initiative can move forward in a timely manner. It will be a wonderful asset to our community.

JenMarie Macdonald, East New Street

Dear Council,

During a global pandemic and economic crisis, I'm concerned with the rezoning of St. Joseph's Hospital. By rezoning, the city loses critical medical space and a possible homeless shelter, both essential to the community if COVID-19 cases and evictions rise.

John Esbenshade, College Avenue

I want to express my support for the HDC/WPE project proposed for the old St Joseph Hospital site. I attended their webinar last week & it confirmed that I do indeed think it's a good fit for this area.

John Haney, West Chestnut Street

After reading the LNP articles on this project, as well as participating in the very informative virtual neighborhood session hosted by HDC on 8/6, I wanted to express my full support for the rezoning of the hospital complex to a mixed-use development. It is unrealistic to think that these buildings will ever serve as a hospital again, due to their age and outdated technology.

John Holden, North West End Avenue

I once again offer my support for the rezoning of 250 College Ave from Hospital Complex District to Mixed Use. The proposed project is in its infancy but the first step is having the property rezoned. As a long time resident I realize a hospital will never be located there and really do not have issue with that. The proposed project checks a lot of boxes for the best use of that site.

Jose E. Diaz, Helen Avenue, Manheim Township

The Lancaster City Community Does Not Need Redevelopment for the Wealthy

On December 15, 2016 a supposedly novel plan to address the poverty in the City and possibly the county was born, its name is "One Good Job." A lot of energy and hopes were placed in this tool as an operational guideline to decrease significantly poverty in Lancaster City. This plan discussed the key conditions that create and promote poverty and isolation from opportunities. Notwithstanding many of these factors are in place smothering the possibilities of improvement in Lancaster. Rezoning with a few "affordable housing" units on this property, will not solve the persistent housing problem and will increase the gentrification evident in the City. Not re-opening it as a healthcare facility for the community, will bring results no different from those experienced by the residents of the Southeast, during the "redevelopment" of the '60s and '70s. A medical institution that has been a pillar for the stability of this community will be gone.

We cannot talk about commitment of City Government to solve poverty in the community while it is letting UPMC-Pinnacle to get away with murder. Do not forget that this is the same business organization that once got possibly for cheap the Hospital and proceeded to go non-profit with the help of Pennsylvania taxpayer's money. Do not forget that this is the same institution that threatened the City Government with withholding the Pilot Funds donations if their condition as non-profit was challenged.

Dear Council members, do not approve this rezoning project, after all we are in midst of a pandemic. Do not fall into the blackmailing of this huge financial institution called UPMC. Support healthcare for all, it's a human right.

Kirsten Hoover, College Avenue

I am writing to state my support of the redevelopment plan that was released for the former hospital site on College Avenue. I was especially excited to learn about the affordable housing units that will be included in the space as Lancaster needs these greatly as it continues to become a thriving and strong community. I also appreciate the focus of creating sites for locally owned businesses and making sure to build and create spaces that support the environment by using sustainable building practices. I support HDC and look forward to seeing the project as it becomes a reality.

Laura Korach Howell, North West End Avenue

I am a resident in the immediate neighborhood around the old St. Joe's hospital. I have lived on North West End Ave for approximately 23 years. And I firmly support the change in zoning from hospital use to mixed zoning. I am very excited about what the development of this large city block will bring to our neighborhood as well as to Lancaster city. Not only does it support our city through the increased tax revenue but it helps make our northwest corner of the city even more livable. We will only benefit from the diversity this development will create - both economic, ethnic, and cultural. I am a huge proponent of Lancaster city. I see this as a total win for our community.

Laurie Shigley Brown, Marietta Avenue

Questions and Comments Concerning the Redevelopment of the Former UPMC Hospital Property

1. The property whose continued vacancy is of the greatest concern is the main hospital grounds between College and West End Avenues, on the one hand, and West Walnut Street and Marietta Avenue, on the other. Why is that part of the project, by far the main part, not being treated as Phase One?

2. Why are "affordable" and "market" rate housing units not being more fully integrated instead of the affordable housing being placed in outlying areas as segregated islands? More affordable housing should be added to the main block where there is ample space and plenty of room in the plans for revision of the presently projected arrangement of things.

3. A great deal is being said about “walkability” in promoting the virtues of this project. What is meant by this term? Walkable to what, by whom, for what, when, under what circumstances? One could walk to Central Market, for example, but it would be a considerable walk to and fro, and not a particularly inviting one in the rain, for example, or by someone with physical limitations. Could one walk to a job-location outside the city-limits? The City Council, and the developers, could and should ask more such particular questions. Moreover, the fact that the location may be in some unspecified sense “walkable” should not be permitted to disguise the other likely fact that this project is going to bring a lot of cars and other vehicles into the area.

4. If the main block is developed as planned, it seems probable that there will be a need for overflow-parking beyond whatever parking-provisions are made on the main site. The hospital itself required such overflow-lots, and it was for that purpose that they used the parking-lot at 913 Wheatland Avenue and one on the southeast corner of Marietta and West End Avenues. The latter of these two lots is evidently no longer owned by UPMC, and the former is being envisioned as the site of a large apartment-building on the outskirts of the main project. What provisions are being made for overflow parking needs? Would it not make more sense to postpone decisions on the use of 913 Wheatland Avenue, perhaps by moving the development of that small parcel to Phase Two, but, in any case, by waiting until it is clear that the existing parking lot on that site would not be better kept in its present use as overflow-parking for the main site?

Loyde Hartley, Marietta Avenue

I ask for delay on any decision regarding rezoning of the former St. Joseph property, and all other matters regarding this property, until residents in the surrounding area have been properly notified in writing about all proposed changes and development plans, as was promised by the Mayor and City Council at the first informational meeting last year. Thank you.

Maria Mitchell, North West End Avenue

As a long-time resident of the 300 block of North West End Ave, I am writing in support of the proposal to rezone the former hospital site from "Hospital Complex" to "Mixed Use." I see significant benefits in the plans by Washington Place Equities and HDC MidAtlantic to include 100-120 affordable housing units in addition to market-rate apartments and houses. In particular, I favor the construction of new row homes on Walnut and North West End Ave in keeping with the style of the neighborhood. The current parking lot – empty and desolate – adds nothing to our neighborhood, and it is vexing to walk by the enormous edifice of the former Lancaster Regional Hospital knowing that housing needs in Lancaster City are pressing while that building remains vacant. This appears to be the chance of a generation to build productively on abandoned sites in a way in keeping with neighborhood values and aesthetics.

Min Xiong and Michael Hinton, North West End Avenue

I am sure you are aware that the proposed development of the old St. Joe’s hospital includes a 4-story apartment building at 913 Wheatland Avenue. This is a small lot for such a large number of units (proposed 20-30 units). I understand the developer needs to have a certain amount of apartments to make the economics of the project work. Where will parking be provided for this tower? There is not enough off-street parking for approximately 40-60 additional cars and any additional parking will be a block to a block and a half away at the old hospital site (if there is additional parking planned – that has not been mentioned in the news reports – and they seem to be committed to developing every possible section).

Developing the hospital site is a good thing for the neighborhood. Adding so many housing units in a relatively small amount of space (300-325 units) will dramatically change the character of the neighborhood by increasing traffic.

In addition we live and operate our business out of 60 N West End Avenue. Our parking area is adjacent to the proposed apartment building. We need to have the access to our parking area (24 Alley Way NW)

protected as part of this project.

Nick Hopkins, North West End Avenue

My name is Nick Hopkins, and I live at 329 N. West End Ave., just around the corner from the old UPMC (nee St. Joseph's) hospital. I've lived on this block off and on since 1961. I moved away for many years (roughly 1982 to 2010), but returned to Lancaster, and to this block, because I love the character of this neighborhood, and of Lancaster in general.

I'd like to say, for the record, that I am strongly in favor of rezoning this property to mixed use, and in favor of the planned development which will create a mix of single family homes and apartments and retail and office space, with some market-rate and some affordable housing options. In my opinion, this will add to the diversity, vibrancy and livability of this corner of Lancaster. It will also add to the overall supply of high quality housing in the City, which is key to make the entire market more affordable and accessible to all who want to live here.

I understand that there are members of our community who feel that this rezoning permanently eliminates a healthcare resource that was important to the local area. I sympathize with their point of view. However, I think it's unrealistic to think that this property will ever revert back to being an operating hospital. Nor do I think that having a full-service hospital of this type would be the best way to deliver better medical care to the community. Providing universal access to quality healthcare (preventive, mental, acute, etc.) in this city, country, state and country goes well beyond trying to force this issue via a zoning ordinance. Having an aging, unused property like the UPMC building sitting in the middle of the neighborhood does absolutely no one any good.

Nick Mandalakas MD, Jacksonville, Florida, Former Medical Staff President and Hospital Board Member of Lancaster Regional Medical Center

Thank you for accepting my comments regarding rezoning of the former Saint Joseph Hospital property. Briefly, I want to support efforts to redevelop the property, especially with the goal of providing affordable housing to the community. However, I also want to encourage you to work on having an urgent care facility at the site.

I worked in Lancaster for over 28 years and was on staff at all of the county hospitals as well as Saint Joseph Reading and more recently at Pinnacle Harrisburg. I am in Jacksonville, Florida now, but be assured that I left not because of weather or the desire to slow down, but instead because of an unfavorable medical practice environment there for me. We sadly left that area, and our family and friends, after I became convinced the UPMC was more concerned about selling health insurance than about having successful medical practices in Lancaster County.

It is a poorly kept secret that UPMC pushed Pinnacle to purchase hospitals in Lancaster, Lititz, York, and Hanover. They only wanted to take over the hospital in Carlisle. I fully expect them at some point to sell off hospitals including the one in Lititz.

The clinic on College Avenue is run by residents from the former Community Hospital of Lancaster who are now based in Lititz. It is entirely possible that a future owner of the hospital now called UPMC Lititz would stop the family practice and Internal Medicine residency programs and close that clinic.

You should realize that UPMC provides physician care services at that location, but no longer has lab or x-ray on site. I am not sure if they provide those services at Manheim Pike and Dillerville Road. However, I am certain that it would be very difficult for someone without a car to use public transportation to travel from Saint Joe's to that location on Manheim Pike.

I assume the process of evaluating this request for rezoning has involved assessing the ability of other clinics in the city which accept Medicaid (LGH residents' clinic, former Southeast Clinic, Water Street and Brightside) to expand their capacity. Those are certainly fine facilities, some of them run by good friends of mine, but I believe they already service a high patient volume.

You should unashamedly ask UPMC to commit to running the clinic in the future and consider whether that responsibility can be transferred to a future owner of their local hospitals. I would further require them to provide the previously mentioned ancillary services or provide a shuttle to another facility where they do phlebotomy and x-rays as a condition of agreeing to this rezoning request.

Patrick Spellman, College Avenue

I want to voice my support for the plan presented by HDC-Mid-Atlantic and Washington Place Equities for the redevelopment of the former UPMC Hospital Site. I think the plan strikes a good balance between residential and commercial use that will provide some real benefits to the area. I also feel very strongly that the incorporation of low-income housing will be beneficial to many families in our neighborhood that may otherwise be forced out by the current increase in property values and rent on the West End and throughout the city. Thank you.

Wilson Brown, Marietta Avenue

Questions concerning the plan to build a four-storey apartment building—which would be a very imposing structure in the intended location—on the parcel of land at 913 Wheatland Avenue, currently a tree-lined parking-lot belonging to UPMC:

- 1. What would be the ratio between the exterior horizontal dimensions of the proposed four-storey building and the outer dimensions of the land-parcel? Differently stated, how much surrounding space would remain from the outer edge of the building to the outer edge of the property in all four directions?*
- 2. Is it feasible to house 20 to thirty families decently in four storeys— which would mean from five to eight families per storey—of a building of the size that could reasonably be accommodated by a parcel of land the size of 913 Wheatland Avenue, namely, 0.32 acres?*
- 3. To what extent, and in what respect, has consideration been given to the question of the compatibility of the building with the neighboring residential properties with respect to the size of the building and its envisioned architectural character?*
- 4. What effect is the addition of twenty to thirty families, densely situated in the rather small parcel at 913 Wheatland Avenue, projected to have on:
 - a. water-pressure?*
 - b. storm-water runoff and drainage?*
 - c. the capacity of the seven-inch sewer lines?*
 - d. the availability of parking?**

What further effect on these facilities and functions will their periodic visitors and service-providers have? Concerning the parking-facilities alone, is it conceivable that, on the lot in question, it would be possible to construct (a) a building of that size, situated towards the street, and (b) parking-facilities for occupants of that number, with the spaces situated behind the building (the present plan, evidently), as well as (c) the necessary driveways for ingress and egress to and from the parking-spaces (as well, presumably, as (d) trash disposal- and collection-facilities? However “walkable” the location may be, is it at all probable, much less certain,—other than by false inference from the invocation of the mere term “walkable” or even from the possible fact of “walkability”—that the eventual occupants, their visitors, and their service-providers will not own automobiles and will not need a place to park them?

- 5. The forgoing question may be all the more important when it is considered that the property occupying most of the block immediately to the south of 913 Wheatland Avenue is the site of a large condominium-complex comprising 135 units. What is the projected impact of further increasing the density of this already densely populated area on water-use, sewer-use, and parking-space?*
- 6. What method is being foreseen for waste-disposal?
 - a. Are dumpsters being envisioned in the rear of the building?*
 - b. If so, what means is being foreseen for the necessary heavy vehicular access to that area?*
 - c. Again, if the use of dumpsters is being envisioned, has any thought been given to the inevitable noise-disturbance that will create in the adjacent and opposite residential neighborhoods?**

7. Typically, when the rear boundaries of residential properties on parallel streets abut one another, an alleyway is built between them in order to provide a combination of access to the rear of the properties in the interior of the block and a buffer-zone between those properties. What provision will be made for such a need?
8. Several of the properties to the north and northwest of 913 Wheatland Avenue already enjoy the benefit of long-established easements creating a right of way running east and west along their southern edges, turning south at the northeast corner of 913 Wheatland Avenue, running along the eastern boundary of 913 Wheatland Avenue, and issuing onto Wheatland Avenue. What provision will be made for the maintenance of that right of way?
9. The 900-block of Marietta Avenue, the 10-block of West End Avenue, and the intersection of Marietta and West End Avenues are becoming increasingly, intrusively noisy with the ever-growing volume of traffic moving on those streets and through that intersection. What additional measure of vehicular noise is likely to be added to the surroundings by the proposed significant increase in population-density in this small area?
10. In view of the unsuitability of the size of the projected apartment building, has consideration been given to building a single-family residence or a pair of townhouses, at 913 Wheatland Avenue?
11. How will the proposed apartment-building affect access to the rear of the properties on the 900-block of Marietta Avenue by emergency-vehicles such as fire-engines and ambulances, should such access become necessary or advantageous?
12. Perhaps even more fundamentally, will the proposed construction permit emergency-access to the rear of the proposed four-storey building itself?

J. Eric Fisher, Woods Avenue, Lancaster Township

The City of Lancaster has a Human Relations Ordinance that includes LGBTQ+, BIPOC and the poor since 2001. We actively use that ordinance to attract new families and businesses to our City and regularly state it is our community values.

The City of Lancaster became a “City Authentic” since 2010 under Mayor Gray. At the time, Mayor Gray stated, “the slogan is intended to give the city its own identity separate from the surrounding County” and “the object of the new brand is to distinguish the City from the County so it can begin to define itself.” But even at the time, residents criticized public funds going to branding efforts rather than creating jobs. It’s worth noting that an existing community does not require people in power to “define” them.

The City of Lancaster has had a Mayor’s Commission to Combat poverty since 2015 when it was formed under Mayor Gray. It’s worth noting that this Commission was recently published in LNP and written by former Mayor Art Morris.

Mayor Sorace campaigned on building on Mayor Gray’s progress and was endorsed by Mayor Gray as “his chosen successor.”

Our Mayor has emphatically supported this by stating “We cannot both celebrate diversity and dismiss it out of hand. We are better than this.”

Our Lancaster City Planning Commission recently approved a “Statement on Advancing Racial Equity Within Lancaster City Planning” which clearly states “Moving forward, the Planning Commission aims to put equity considerations front and center in its work. Our upcoming Comprehensive Planning process offers a ripe opportunity to prioritize racial equity considerations through zoning ordinance changes and as new planning objectives are established.”

The City of Lancaster is a “City Authentic,” “A Welcoming City,” a “Love Your Block” City.

The question we have in front of us from multiple angles related to urban change is very simple: Do these slogans, commissions and statements serve simply as symbols of intent or do they represent a commitment to action? Do we continue to serve the diverse people that inhabited our City since the dark days of White Flight or do we dismiss it out of hand in exchange for building business and tax revenue? Who benefits from the changes and who will be left behind or displaced?

I am afraid that the grips of gentrification are already too deep to prevent what other gentrified cities across the country have already experienced: communities that are increasingly white, straight, cis and affluent - and here in Lancaster, religiously conservative.

I identify as queer and am therefore better versed at LGBTQ+ issues, but I know that my issues are the similar and intersecting with non-Christians, women, Black, Indigenous and People of Color, and the poor. I understand that, perhaps, City leadership needs to play nice with social and religious Conservatives. But if we are to be “authentic” and “welcoming,” we must adhere to the promises of the past and present -- or discard them entirely. The Water Street Mission, The Trust Performing Arts Center, Eastern Mennonite Missions (who founded Landis Communities in the 1960’s) represent just a few of our religious non-profits who hold discriminatory positions towards LGBTQ+ people in policy and practice. As a kid, I was taught about “House Rules” and later during graduate school work related to social justice work within communities, I learned the importance of adhering to existing community values when entering a community that is not my own.

I support religious freedom, but I do not support discrimination veiled as religion. We should expect that powerful orgs that wish to move to our City - like Lancaster Bible College, Eastern Mennonite Missions, Willow Valley and Landis Communities - adhere to our long stated and much-touted values. At the very least, we should require them to be transparent about practices antithetical to our stated values so that our residents and visitors can make informed choices about who to support and how to avoid harm.

I walked the streets of North Brooklyn - one of the country’s most rapidly gentrified neighborhoods - everyday for fifteen years. I watched the change on the ground level. I evolved from privileged spectator to community activist as I watched promises made fail to come to fruition. We were not without an incredible community of strong elected officials, community boards, communities of faith, artists and activists working hard to avoid what actually was inevitable. I saw the same systems deeply at root when I returned to Lancaster in 2016. I may not have the same credentials that many powerful Lancaster leaders have - although the ones I do have are pretty exceptional - but I have a lived experience that I have spent countless hours reflecting on and learning about.

BIPOC people, LGBTQ+ people, non-Christians and the Poor and Dispossessed need immediate action, not simply feel good, well-intentioned slogans, commissions and statements that too often serve as stand-ins for the work itself.