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February 20, 2020

Dear Neighbor:

This information is to make you aware of a proposed development in East Oak Lane and to ask for your input in opposing it.

The proposal is for a 40 unit, 1 bedroom senior apartment building to be located at the intersection of North 12th Street and Oak Lane Avenue. This project requires a zoning variance, as the current zoning does not allow for multifamily dwellings, the proposed height allowance and stipulation for side and back yard clearances, and required parking spaces. The proposed height of the building is 44 feet, exceeding the requirement by 6 feet. The back and side yard allowances are under the requirement by 22 feet and 5 feet. The required number of parking spaces are 27, whereas none are proposed. A parking arrangement for two staff members has been negotiated with Refuge Baptist Church, the sponsor of the project, along with a private developer, Conifer.

You may recall that Refuge presented a request for variance for a parking lot at this location back in 2016. This was approved conditionally at a Community Meeting and approved, with conditions, by the Zoning Board. The conditions were lighting, landscaping, erection of a fence - in accordance with community standards, availability for community use, and including benches for community use. Feel free to drive past the intersection to see what improvements have been made to the lot since 2016.

Notice for a Community Meeting was made via letter, public postings, an email notice, and a notice at the Oak Lane Library. The Community Meeting was held Wednesday, February 5, 2020, and the project was opposed by an 84 to 15 vote majority. A letter of this vote was sent to the Zoning Board of Adjustment, the City Planning Commission, and Office of Councilwoman Cherelle Parker. Individual letters were also sent to the Friends of the Oak Lane Library, The Tree Tenders, and individual residents who live directly adjacent to the proposed development.

The Zoning Board Hearing was then held on Wednesday, February 12, 2020. At the hearing, over 25 residents took the time to travel into Center City to appear and/or testify at the Zoning Hearing. Stated opposition to the project was based on the following:

Location: This is not well thought out, as it is on the same block as an existing multifamily apartment complex, which is already zoned to allow for multifamily units. These two buildings would bring, at minimum, 94 residents, in addition to the residents of the homes on this one block (allowing for only one tenant per unit at the proposed development).

Traffic: The intersection of North 12th Street and Oak Lane Avenue already supports traffic and parking from the Oak Lane Library and the Ellwood School, in addition to traffic from the congregations and church activities of the Oak Lane Presbyterian Church

and Refuge Baptist Churches at North 11th Street and Oak Lane Avenue. This new building would significantly increase traffic from its new residents, their families, friends and other service providers.

Parking: The lack of parking spaces will exponentially increase the demand for street parking spaces on the immediate and extended surrounding blocks.

Building Design: The design of this building, as proposed, is unappealing to many as it is a square, red brick building, which appears to be consistent with the design of the Refuge Baptist Church, rather than in harmony with the architectural history of buildings of Oak Lane.

Population and Building Density: There are already apartment complexes at 69th Avenue and North 12th Street and at North 8th Street and 66th Avenue. In addition, the rehabilitation of the condominium building at 6751 North 13th Street is expected to provide additional multifamily dwelling space. This area from North 7th Street to Broad Street and Oak Lane Avenue to W. Cheltenham Avenue is full of apartments, including illegal single family conversions, group homes, personal care homes, rehabilitation homes, and does not require additional congregate housing. Congregate housing for senior citizens is a worthy idea, however, the location chosen does not meet the zoning requirements and is certain to cause disruption to the immediate and adjacent neighbors.

Access: According to the funding requirements, no preference can be given to East Oak Lane residents, and though this is described as “affordable housing,” out of the 40 units, fewer than 10 units would be open and available for persons at the maximum income level of \$57,000 annually.

No Hardship: Would be caused to the church, as the income from the project will primarily go to the developer, per the funding arrangement. Sale of this land could well fund a project at another location. More members of the church appear to reside outside of the boundaries of East Oak Lane than within.

For residents who are not in favor of this development, who feel that it is not the obligation of the community to fulfill someone else’s idea, and agree that its building allows and promotes continuing and zoning noncompliance, adds to overcrowding, is an unnecessary addition to the landscape and the existing number of congregate units, will have an adverse impact on traffic and parking - resulting in a cumulatively adverse impact upon the near neighbors and the East Oak Lane Community as a whole, we want to hear from you!

You are invited to appear at the next hearing, and/or send your opinion, in writing, prior to the Continued Hearing Date on Tuesday, April 21, 2020, to:

Chairman Frank DiCicco, Zoning Board of Adjustment, 1401 JFK Boulevard, 11th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19102, or email RCOZBA@phila.gov

Jonathan Goins or Ian Hegarty, City Planning Commission, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19102, or email RCO Notification@phila.gov

Councilwoman Cherelle Parker, City Hall, Room 577, Philadelphia, PA 19107, or email hilary.emerson@phila.gov

There will be an exercise in civic engagement and empowerment write-in event on Saturday, February 29, 2020 at The Oak Lane Library at North 12th Street and Oak Lane Avenue from 1:00 – 3:00 PM, where you may write your letter or drop off your letter for mailing by OLCAA, with copies retained for evidence of community sentiment. If you have suggestions for desired or needed senior support services, please include that in the letter as well. Other ideas to present in support of community cohesion are welcomed.

In Communitas: Shared, Interest, Vision, Goals

Respectfully,

Oak Lane Community Action Association