

ATTN: Pittsburgh Zoning Board of Adjustment
Alice Mitinger, LaShawn Burton-Faulk, and John J. Richardson,

I am writing to let you know that I am opposed to the zoning board granting the variances requested by Craft Development Corporation for their proposed development at the current site of the Irish Center. This area was zoned as Park Zone, and I believe it was correctly zoned.

This section of land is surrounded by Frick Park with many trailheads starting across the street from the proposed development. They are asking for a variance to allow them to build a building that is more than 2x taller than a Park Zone allows for. If allowed, this tall building will impact the surrounding park. The building itself, although very pretty, will disturb views from the park and change the feel of the area.

They are also asking to allow for a multi-unit residential variance. They are planning on having 162 units, each including 1, 2, or 3 bedrooms. I believe that the reason that Park Zones don't allow for multi-unit residential buildings is because of the amount of humans it will bring to an area that will impact the park. This is MORE than 162 individuals that will LIVE next to Nine Mile Run, across from Frick Park. Humans doing human things: smoking, littering, driving cars, having visitors, etc. Humans have an impact on the world around us, even when we try to be thoughtful about it.

This development has not been designed thoughtfully. For the 162 units, there are only 182 parking spots. This allows for only one car per unit and 20 "extra" spots that workers and visitors will have to share. With a building this large, I have a hard time believing that less than 20 workers will be in the building at any given time. Where will those extra cars go? They will park in the public gravel parking areas intended for users of Frick Park. There are two VERY SMALL dirt parking lots at the trailhead entrance and another small lot a bit up the block. Those lots will also not be enough for the overflow of cars, but either way, those lots aren't meant to be used by an apartment building, they are meant to be used by people trying to enjoy Frick Park.

During their presentation at a recent Development Activities Meeting, the developer stated that they estimate only 60 additional cars during rush hour using a table that seems to be accepted as the standard; however, those numbers surely are taken from a typical building in an area that is zoned for large multi-unit residential areas. This area is not. The only way people will be able to leave this building is by car and there are no city amenities in this area that would allow for the residents to easily walk to a bus stop, or safely ride a bike out of the development. This further highlights that only 182 spots is not enough parking.

The developer is asking for a larger floor area ratio than is allowed in a Park Zone. Developing more of the land will impact more of nature and will also likely cause unsafe conditions for people trying to use Frick Park. The Irish Center takes up a much smaller footprint of the land than the proposed development will and the visibility is already a concern in this area. Retaining walls over 10 feet tall also will create poor visibility, putting both animals and humans in danger of being struck by a car.

The Development team also needs to claim a hardship in order to be able to ask for these variances. I believe the hardship they are claiming is that it is expensive to get utilities to the Irish Center location so they need to build bigger so they can make money. During the community presentation, they reported that they did not know how much they would sell or rent the units for. If this is the case, I wonder how they could guess at what size development they needed in order to be able to afford to develop this area. I am wondering if their hardship is that they will only make 3 million dollars instead of 30 million dollars. Maybe they will only make 1 million dollars? Is 1 million dollars a hardship? When does hardship come in?

The developer not making ENOUGH money should not count as a hardship for these variances even to be considered. If you do consider granting these variances, I urge you to remember why the area was zoned as Park Zone. Please think about all of the things that this park area will lose by allowing this development to move forward as proposed.