



February 28, 2020

Matt Wysong, Senior City Planner
Phila City Planning Commission
One Parkway Building
1515 Arch street, 13th floor
Phila PA 19102

RE: CDR letter, HOW properties apartments at 4440-42 Ridge Avenue

Dear Matt,

The members of the Zoning and Land Use Committee of the East Falls Community Council (EFCC), acting for the EFCC as the coordinating Registered Community Organization (RCO) for East Falls held a well advertised zoning committee meeting on 2/10/2020 that included this project and the upcoming CDR on the agenda. The meeting was open to the public.

The usual concerns regarding traffic and parking were made by attendees. Unfortunately there are limited things that we believe HOW can do to address these issues given their location and the adjacent streets. Their apartment unit to parking ratio was described as insufficient by some, but it was also noted that HOW has provided a fair number of parking spaces.

Our specific concerns / requests include:

- HOW committed to a construction tunnel during construction of this building to ensure pedestrians can safely cross this section of Ridge Avenue frontage. Their prior townhome construction did not include this feature and the environment became dangerous for pedestrian foot traffic as the sidewalk was encroached upon during construction. Please ensure this is included in the construction phase.
- HOW committed to helpful and attractive signage and features to facilitate apartment residents getting to their building and the parking associated with it while offering some separation for the existing townhomes and their pedestrian and vehicle access. This was a request from townhome owners who attended. This request includes removing the wooden stairs that connect the townhome vicinity of the site to the adjacent vacant City-owned lot.
- The front face / aspect of the building on Ridge Avenue is a very abrupt transition off the streetscape up 72' in elevation with no relief in terms of design features and setbacks as the facade elevation climbs. However the middle of the building is essentially hollowed out - on top of the parking and lower floors which form a basic podium - with the hollowed out / unbuilt relief area plunging into the massing from the Schuylkill River side.

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Presumably this is in order to optimize the building design in terms of making attractive apartment layouts with ample windows and nice views. However the result is potentially a very stark experience regarding the Ridge Avenue elevation and facade as it rises an abrupt 72' off the sidewalk. This could create a wind tunnel and an unappealing pedestrian experience on Ridge Avenue when that is what is desired by the neighborhood and is the long term plan for the commercial corridor. No such goals exist for the Kelly Drive side which does not see much pedestrian traffic. We would urge HOW and its design team to re-evaluate the allocation of built and unbuilt space within the building massing so that the Ridge Avenue elevation can be more attractively stepped back and modulated as it rises. This should be able to be done without impacting the number of units and their quality. It would also better match the other existing and planned apartment buildings along Ridge Avenue.

- There was some discussion about the need for an evaluation of the details, benefits and costs of the paid parking time period for the proposed surface parking on the City-owned lot next door. We believe that the involved parties should evaluate the benefits of extending the planned paid parking time period into the evening to capture parking revenue for dinner and evening activities along the corridor. Some of these funds could be used to improve conditions in our area. One could also consider delaying the start time of the paid parking time in the morning by an hour or two if it would help the adjacent residents and their guests use the lot more seamlessly. We believe that paid parking from 9am - 7pm or 8pm might offer a better combination of neighborhood benefit, support for local commerce and revenue for the City but that regardless the options should be evaluated to make sure that the lot is helping support local commerce to the greatest extent possible.
- In past meetings it was recommended that HOW sponsor a shuttle to the train station to support our transit system and reduce vehicle traffic and parking pressure on Ridge Avenue and the adjacent streets. We are re recommending this suggestion as the project moves through CDR.

Please consider these comments regarding the project at the CDR hearing.

Sincerely,



Todd Baylson - Chair, East Falls Community Council, Zoning Committee

cc:

Bill Epstein EFCC president

EFCC Zoning Committee members

Josh Cohen, CM Jones

HOW properties