

6/8/21 Zoom Meeting with Developer, Neighbors

At Tuesday's Zoom meeting, Ross Nichols of LCS and Patsy Malone, Esq. on behalf of the developer confirmed their intent to seek County approval to build 40 residential units in the Mission Helper parcel (currently zoned DR2 for 8 dwelling units). Up to 80+ new residents would live in five buildings (8 units per building) and use a separate 6th building as a clubhouse. Malone indicated that they would be filing with the County soon, no later than August.

They presented several [new project drawings](#) that showed two major changes from the drawings shown in the February and March Zoom meetings:

- The 75' setback from Chestnut Avenue is restored; and
- The proposed driveway where the current Chestnut Ave. driveway exists is eliminated.

As for the relationship between the project and Blakehurst, Nichols said the final details are still being worked out, but the revised plan is for residents to (a) be "seniors who are not ready for Blakehurst"; (b) be tenants of the units, not owners; (c) have access to some or all Blakehurst services depending on the price paid ("Type A" or "Type C"); and (d) be eligible to move to assisted living or nursing home care as available at Blakehurst but would have no special privileges regarding access to independent living units at Blakehurst. Further, Nichols said the village would be staffed by existing Blakehurst personnel with perhaps 1-2 additional people to help with the new buildings. He called the revised project "a continuation of Blakehurst," whereas before there had been more independence.

Nichols and Malone summarized the variances, amendments, and modifications of existing zoning regulations the project will need:

- Amend the [current zoning plan](#) and [DR2 classification](#) to allow the 40 units permitted by the Restrictive Covenant (as incorporated into the zoning plan) but not enforcing [the limitation of 54 residents](#) set forth in that same Restrictive Covenant;
- Variance from existing height limitations because of the size of some of the buildings;
- Variance from existing internal setback requirements (i.e., inside the village);
- Variance from existing setback requirements vis-à-vis Blakehurst; and

- Modification of the Residential Transition Area requirement to allow parking spaces (and cars), pathways, a driveway, a retaining wall, and other infrastructure.

Neighbors seemed most concerned about the increased traffic. Nichols defended their 2019 traffic study—which presumes the 80 additional residents will only make 11 morning rush hour trips and 13 evening rush hour trips—by asserting that residents age 70+ will choose mostly to stay home at peak hours, and time their trips to avoid traffic. Nichols predicted that residents would also use internal roads to drive to Blakehurst, conduct some business there, and then exit onto Joppa. Finally, Nichols said the traffic study numbers should be even lower because they didn't net out the loss of Mission Helper traffic.

Neighbors pointed out that:

- Chestnut Avenue already suffers from chronic traffic congestion at peak hours because of Loyola and commuters who use Chestnut as a cut-through to Charles Street;
- Chestnut Avenue has 22 households in the half-mile between Joppa and Loyola High School, all of which use Chestnut as their only egress. The project would add 40 new households for a total of 62 households—a tripling of homes—all spilling out onto this small stretch of road.
- The presumption that residents will stay home and limit their rush hour trips is not consistent with the lifestyles of neighbors on the Zoom call, or anyone they knew, who fit the target demographic; and
- There is little if any existing Mission Helper traffic to net out, as any neighbor can attest.

There was also discussion about the existing greenspace buffer at the corner of Chestnut and Mission Helper Drive that separates the existing Mission Helper building from the neighborhood. Nichols said that open space would be eliminated, the dozen or so large trees currently there cut down, and that space replaced by Buildings 1B and 1A.

Neighbors asked if the developer would be willing to draft alternative drawings using a smaller footprint that preserves open space and proposed several options including (a) removing the clubhouse (Blakehurst has other facilities); (b) switching the clubhouse and Building 1B to preserve the existing buffer; and (b) exploring different building sizes and configurations.

- for example, instead of 5 two-story buildings with 8 units each (for a total of 40), they could design 2 *three*-story buildings with 12 units each (24) to go with 2 of their planned two-story buildings with 8 units each (16, for a total of 40) – same overall number, with 4 buildings instead of 5.

Nichols said he might be willing to consider other configurations, but would discuss it first with his partners.

The meeting closed by my noting that the developer has spent more than two years planning, drawing, and marketing this project, and asking if it would be willing to press “pause” on the process for just a few weeks and sit down with the neighbors—in person—to see if an agreement can be reached. Nichols again said he would discuss that with his partners and get back to me.

Both Nichols and Malone agreed to let us know when they file. I will let everyone know when that happens, and when I hear back from Nichols.

In the meantime, please come to our house at **626 Chestnut on Monday, June 14 @ 7 pm** to meet your neighbors and discuss what our options are going forward. We will meet outside on our patio, and can move indoors if necessary. If you can’t come or would prefer to join by Zoom, here is that information:

Topic: Mission Helper Neighbors

Time: Jun 14, 2021 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89251207522?pwd=S3VJUnpjamtKYldWK0JURW5haG5UZz09>

Meeting ID: 892 5120 7522

Passcode: 382507

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Thanks.