

Community Meeting
Hope High School
April 9, 2012, 7:00 p.m.

Robert Azar, Planning Department

- This project involves requests to change both the comprehensive plan and the zoning designation. The City Council will vote on this change.
- The City Plan Commission will hold a hearing on the project on April 24. The Planning Department will state its position on the project approximately a week before the hearing. The public is invited to submit comments to the Planning Department.
- The Planning Department promotes an increase of density in an urban environment. The proposed project would increase resident density in the area by a factor of 4 or 5. The Planning Department will conduct a basic architectural review on such issues as pedestrian level features and the building's facade.
- There is an opportunity during the review process to negotiate with the developer concerning "exactions" or amenities, as well as design concessions.
- Brown University does not have any relation to this project.
- There are no alternative proposals on the table to develop this parcel.

James Hall, Providence Preservation Society

- The Providence Preservation Society Board will meet on April 17. As a general matter, the PPS is opposed to demolition. This project is in a national historic district but not a local one. As a result, there are no legal protections for the issuance of local approvals, but there are for federal approvals. (There do not appear to be any federal approvals at issue here.)

Michael McCormick, Brown University

- Brown University is looking at different sites for a new dormitory building. One of them is the area between Brook and Thayer at Cushing Street. Another is further down Brook Street where there is a bagel shop and a police substation. Brown is raising money to upgrade its dormitories. The upgrades will not increase capacity. Currently, 1,200 Brown students live off campus.

Public comments

- The project will increase density in the neighborhood, which will detract from the area's quality of life.
- The project's scope and scale is not compatible with Thayer Street.
- There should be a discussion about the present and future of Thayer Street to provide a framework for reviewing this project.
- Years ago, RISD considered building a dormitory on College Hill, but after meeting with the neighborhood, decided to move it to Thomas and North Main Street.
- There should be a negotiation with the developer based on the density multiplier factor.
- There is a lack of parking in the neighborhood, making Stimson Avenue a parking lot. The City should confirm that the project's 85 parking spaces are adequate for the 225 planned tenants.
- The City should enforce building code violations at the nine houses slated for demolition in this project.
- The Planning Department should limit developers to one request per location so as to minimize the ability of developers to "torture" the neighborhood.
- The construction of student apartments benefits Brown University; therefore, Brown should yield territory within its "institutional" zone.
- There are other parts of the City that can accommodate an increase in density. Those locations are better sites for student apartments.
- The developer should prepare a scale model of the project and the surrounding neighborhood.
- The developer should conduct a traffic study.
- This development should not be viewed in isolation. Brown also may build in this area. Mr. Bishop would like to construct a hotel nearby.
- A better alternative would be to construct nine new 3-family homes.
- The sidewalks in the neighborhood are atrocious.

- The project area is part of a “doughnut hole” of houses nestled between institutional and commercial buildings. If this project is approved, it will create a “domino effect” that will fill the “doughnut hole.”
- There is no need for an alternative. The present conditions are fine.
- Fair housing laws would appear to prevent the apartment owner from discrimination, which would compromise its plan to fill the apartment with college students.
- The only people who support this project are those who have a financial interest in its approval. It would be better to renovate the existing buildings.
- The project could be improved in several ways, such as:
 - * Setbacks and landscaping;
 - * Smaller, independent units;
 - * Opening the courtyard
- The project should not be approved before the City reviews a traffic study and environmental study.
- The project would improve the current neighborhood, which is currently a gathering place for drug activity.
- It is not realistic to expect the current houses to be renovated, or for another developer to invest in new 3-family houses. The property taxes are too high for 3-family apartments to succeed in this neighborhood.
- The project could be improved to “look nicer.”
- College students place a significant premium on location. The 257 Thayer Street location is ideal for Brown University students.