

SPNA
South Providence
Neighborhood Association

WBNA
West Broadway
Neighborhood Association

PPS
Providence
Preservation Society

August 14, 2020

Providence City Plan Commission
c/o Christine West, Chair
Providence Department of Planning and Development
444 Westminster St
Providence, RI 02903
via Robert Azar and Choyon Manjekar, Department of Planning and Development

Re: Community Meeting for the proposed redevelopment of the old Citizens Bank Site,
corner of Cranston and Westminster Streets

Dear Chairman West,

On the evening of August 10, 2020, the Providence City Council sponsored a virtual community meeting on the topic of the proposed redevelopment of the old Citizens Bank site at Canonicus Square. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate community engagement with the development planning process for the proposed redevelopment. There were 47 participants at the virtual meeting conducted via Zoom.

As we know, this is a major project for the West End and surrounding neighborhoods. It is a critical, high-visibility, large-scale, historically significant site at the intersection of two major neighborhood corridors, serving as a gateway to the West End and beyond. At the apex of the site is the historic Citizens Bank Building, one of the most iconic buildings on the western side of the City. Such an important site demands serious, thoughtful, thorough and creative analysis, planning and design to envision the best long-term development for the City.

The community joined the meeting to learn about the proposed project and process. Participants mistakenly thought that the developer might also want to learn about and address the concerns of the community. Attendees were perplexed that the developer gave no presentation of the project plans, explaining, when questioned, that they did not plan a presentation because it was not their meeting. The meeting participants asked many pertinent questions and requested consideration of neighborhood impact, however, the developer was unwilling to consider incorporating community input.

The community participants voiced overwhelming opposition to both the process and the project as planned. Some of the basis of the opposition is shown below.

The Development Project

- Does not follow the Neighborhood Plan
- Does not follow the Comprehensive Plan
- Does not address the site in a comprehensive manner
- Does not offer any community amenities
- Does not offer any greenspace
- Does not reduce the predominance of surface parking and the associated heat island effect
- Does not respond to the community need for diversity of housing unit sizes
- Does not provide units for families
- Does not provide units that are affordable for the neighborhood

- Does not provide inclusion of low-to-moderate & predominately renters of color for available units (disparate impact)
- Does not respond to the neighborhood context, neither socially, economically nor physically
- Does not provide any amount of ground-floor commercial
- Does not follow best practice design for entryways on neighborhood corridors
- Does not follow best practice design for relationship of the ground floor with the sidewalk and street

The Development Process

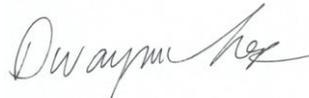
- Is excluding real neighborhood participation
- Exhibits racial injustice through exclusion
- Does not indicate plans for local hiring, especially BIPOC residents, or utilizing MBE/WBE subcontractors
- Through exclusion and dismissal, increases disenfranchisement of the local community
- Is not providing adequate information to the community
- Is not explaining the planning and design decisions to the community
- Is not involving the community in consideration of the development plans
- Is not interested in incorporating community input
- Is disregarding neighborhood interests
- Does not value neighborhood engagement and support
- Is disrespectful of neighborhood residents and their concerns
- Is seeking City approval without authentic neighborhood involvement
- Does not demonstrate best development practice of community engagement

Not only were the meeting participants opposed to the site plan and building design, they were deeply offended by the developer’s dismissive disregard for the community. This was not a real community meeting with real respect for and exchange of ideas and opinions. This was just a developer trying to get his poorly considered project approved regardless of the concerns of the people who will be most impacted.

Sincerely,



Kari Lang
West Broadway
Neighborhood Association



Dwayne Keys
South Providence
Neighborhood Association



Brent Runyon
Providence
Preservation Society

And concerned residents and neighborhood advocates included on the attached list

Cc: Omni Group, William DiStefano
Mayor Jorge Elorza