



President:  
Steve Kendall

Vice President-Programs  
Maura Kennedy  
Morrie Zimmerman

Vice President-Finance  
Rob Pelszynski  
Vice President-Fundraising  
Carla Pagan

Vice President-Administration  
Sam Lifson-Neubardt

Board Members:  
Adrienne Carpenter  
Jarma Frisby  
Paul Gill  
Kevin Keene  
Steve Kendall  
Maura Kennedy  
Sam Lifson-Neubardt  
Susan Matyas  
Dane Menkin  
Cheryl Nelson  
Katie O'Connor  
Carla Pagan  
Robert Pelszynski  
Ralph Pinkus  
Octavius Price  
Nicole Seawright  
Morrie Zimmerman

Executive Director:  
Josephine Winter

258 W. Gorgas Lane  
Philadelphia, PA 19119

[westmtairyneighbors@gmail.com](mailto:westmtairyneighbors@gmail.com)  
[www.wman.net](http://www.wman.net)

September 29, 2024

Ms. Eliza Bower  
Civic Design Review  
Philadelphia Planning Commission  
One Parkway Bldg.  
1515 Arch St. – Floor 13  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

By E-mail

RE: 309 W. Mount Pleasant Ave.

Dear Ms. Bower:

On Wednesday, September 4, 2024, the West Mt. Airy Neighbors Zoning Committee on behalf of West Mt. Airy Neighbors Association (WMAN), the Registered Community Organization (RCO) held a community meeting to hear a presentation describing the proposed 66-unit mixed use development at the referenced address. Eighty-two interested neighbors attended the meeting along with seven members of the WMAN Zoning Committee and the developers' representatives. I chaired the meeting.

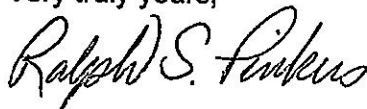
It was clear from comments of the attendees, there was strong opposition to the proposed project because of the failure to provide any off-street parking spaces for residents and at five stories spread over what was previously seven separate lots, the project will dwarf all nearby homes and commercial properties. Subsequent to the meeting, the attorney for the developer advised me of a revised plan to provide 21 off-street parking spaces and an access ramp entering the development from West Mt. Pleasant Ave. This represents a substantial modification from the plans that were considered at our community meeting and calls into question whether the CDR should consider this proposal unless a new community meeting is first convened. To come before the community with a plan that showed 50% of the ground floor space with no assigned use and state the developer's intent to provide no off-street parking (a "hot-button" issue in West Mt. Airy) clearly evidenced an intention on the part of the developer to distract from other salient aspects of the development that will have detrimental impact, as noted below.

Specifically, consolidating 7 lots into a 160-foot wide lot in this neighborhood commercial strip far exceeds the scale and scope for a project that is contemplated by the CMX-2 zoning classification. The developer has employed all possible

zoning bonus opportunities to crowd 66 residential units into the proposed development. It should be noted there are plans for an added 160 units on this small commercial strip along W. Mt. Pleasant Ave. Because of the CMX-2 zoning classification, it is possible no off-street parking will be provided for these additional units. An architect in attendance questioned whether the scale method used to calculate the dimension of the proposed structure results in the structure exceeding the permitted 45-foot height limit. Also, with a parapet, the actual height of the structure will be 53 feet. At five stories, the building will result in blocking air and light to adjoining single family residential properties at the rear along Lincoln Drive and West Durham Street. This could be mitigated by stepping back the structure from the rear property line, perhaps requiring a 4-6 unit reduction in the total number of residential units. It should be noted that most of the near neighborhood homes are either 2 or 3 stories in height, not the 5 stories of the proposed structure. The massive scale of the proposed building will tower over the immediate neighborhood, especially as West Mount Pleasant Avenue is in reality barely 3 lanes wide. Because there will be minimal side yard space, windows along the side of the building will confront existing neighbors' homes and intrude on their privacy. We recommend moving the proposed roof deck community space to the West Mt. Pleasant Avenue side of the building to afford greater privacy to the Durham St. neighbors. Such a relocation will not be as offensive because the roof deck will be along the commercial side of the property. To the extent there is any architectural variety in the building façade, just the opposite will be true for the other facades facing into our neighborhood-just bland siding with no architectural finesse or detail.

Of course, providing 21 off-street parking spaces is a positive step; however, whether addition of 66 new residents in the neighborhood will require more than 21 parking spaces could still present an issue of congestion. In fairness, WMAN received a letter supporting the proposed development from six West Mt. Airy residents, none of whom attended our meeting. I trust the CDR will take into consideration our comments focusing on how the proposed 66 unit residential/commercial project will impact the fabric of our wonderful West Mt. Airy neighborhood.

Very truly yours,



Ralph S. Pinkus

Chair-West Mt. Airy Neighbors Zoning Committee

Cc: Honorable Cindy Bass – [Cindy.Bass@phila.gov](mailto:Cindy.Bass@phila.gov)  
Mr. Charles Richardson – [Charles.Richardson@phila.gov](mailto:Charles.Richardson@phila.gov)  
Ms. Ruffian Tittman – Friends of the Wissahickon – [Tittmann@fow.org](mailto:Tittmann@fow.org)  
Mr. Ian Hegarty – [Ian.Hegarty@phila.gov](mailto:Ian.Hegarty@phila.gov)  
Tom Chiacchio, Esq. – [chiacchio@thclaw.com](mailto:chiacchio@thclaw.com)  
Sergio Coscia – CosciaMoos – [scoscia@cosciamoos.com](mailto:scoscia@cosciamoos.com)  
Steve Kendall – WMAN President – [drstephenkendall@gmail.com](mailto:drstephenkendall@gmail.com)  
Josephine Winter – WMAN Executive Director – [Josephine.g.winter@gmail.com](mailto:Josephine.g.winter@gmail.com)  
WMAN Zoning Committee  
Near Neighbors