

Alert for the 2nd day on public hearing day for proposed 170-unit apartment

A 2nd day for public testimony has been scheduled by the hearing officer for Friday, January 18th from 3 pm to 6 pm in the City Council chambers for the proposed 170-unit apartment building proposed between two popular community parks; the Pavilion Ice Rink and the riverside McKay Park. Day one of the hearing was plagued with a room too small and a time slot in the middle of a work day.

In the first day of the public hearing, staff presented a staff report listing their “finding’s on whether the application met the “applicable criteria.” The staff report recommended approval of the proposed site plan and a variance to allow the building to exceed a height limitation. The applicant presented a brief project narrative for a project that appears to have made no attempt to address the concerns raised by the standing-room-only crowd at the mandated “neighborhood meeting” held last March.

Supporters testified to their belief that this proposed project is a fulfillment of the adopted city planning concept of creating tall housing near the center of town. They believe this building housing located near the center of town allows the project’s residents to reduce their “vehicle miles traveled” (VMT) by allowing work and play to occur in a close radius their new residence.

Opponents testified to a number of concerns, including but not limited to; a) residents of the new building will compete for the limited number of on-street parking with the recreation users of these two popular community parks plus existing businesses and residence , b) traffic from this new building would add more traffic to nearby intersections that are already failing from existing local traffic and the many commuters who use these important arterial streets of Colorado and Simpson to travel east-west. The applicant is required to make a small payment of \$56,000 with towards future fixes with no schedule for implementation, and c) the tall building towers over existing small businesses, small residences, the Deschutes River and McKay Park.

The highlight of this first day was the testimony by opponents of the applicant failure to comply with “applicable criteria”. The hearing officer began by informing the audience that his decision had to be based on “applicable criteria” which normally is just the Bend Development Code. The opponents claimed the project fails to comply with the “applicable criteria” of the city approved Shevlin Center Master Plan’s standards. Both the applicant and the staff appeared to overlook this master plan. The key testimony came from Bill Smith who gave a history lesson in his long battle to obtain city and state approval of a master plan intended for *“creation of a stimulating, attractive, mixed-use environment through the use and inter-relationship of open spaces, building locations, building scale and design, and pedestrian amenities.”* Both supporters and opponents agree that the expected rent for the mostly studios and one bedroom units will be much higher than the current the top of the market rents due to high construction costs and the extremely high land price.

This project debate is more than a small neighborhood trying to protect its status quo. Our entire community will be impacted and we urge you to voice your opinion. Over 100 written comments are posted on the city website and you can speak at day two or submit written comments to bharrington@bendoregon.gov with a reference to PZ 18-429 (site plan) and PZ 18-430 (height variance).