

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW REPORT

ZONE CHANGE PETITION No. DCP-MPZC-2020-01245

PROPERTY: 29 Parcels in the Larimer Neighborhood
PROPERTY OWNER: City of Pittsburgh and Urban Redevelopment Authority
EXISTING ZONING: Multi-Unit Residential High Density (RM-H) and Single Unit Detached Residential High Density (R1D-H) to Local Neighborhood Commercial (LNC)
PROPOSED ZONING: Local Neighborhood Commercial (LNC)
ACTION REQUIRED: Public Hearing and Recommendation to City Council
COUNCIL DISTRICT: 9; Councilperson Rev. Ricky Burgess
DATE: March 9, 2021
SUBMITTED TO: The Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. An application for rezoning was filed by Buchanan Ingersoll and Rooney PC to rezone 29 parcels with frontage on Larimer Avenue, Maxwell Way, Shetland Avenue, Rapidan Way, and Joseph Street from Multi-Unit Residential High Density (RM-H) and Single Unit Detached Residential High Density (R1D-H) to Local Neighborhood Commercial (LNC). See attached map.
2. One of the parcels is owned by the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the rest are owned by the City of Pittsburgh. The applicant has provided written documentation providing authorization to file the Zone Change Petition.
3. Enactment of this rezoning will permit the involved property to be developed for uses permitted in the Local Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District (LNC).
4. No application for development has been submitted to the Planning Department.
5. Property owners within 150 feet of the proposed zone change area were notified of the proposal. Notice of this Planning Commission hearing was mailed to abutting property owners 21 days in advance and posted on the City Planning website. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, notices cannot be printed, distributed in person, or posted at sites. This alternative process is authorized by Pennsylvania Act 15 of 2020 (SB 841).
6. The Development Activities Meeting was held virtually with the Larimer Consensus Group on February 4th, 2021. Please see attached memo.
7. In accordance with Section 922.05.F, the Planning Commission shall review Zoning District Map or Zoning Code text amendments based on the following criteria:
 - a. The consistency of the proposal with adopted plans and policies of the City;
 - b. The convenience and welfare of the public;
 - c. The intent and purpose of the Zoning Code;
 - d. Compatibility of the proposal with the zoning, uses and character of the neighborhood;
 - e. The suitability of the subject property for the uses to which it has been restricted without the proposed zoning map amendment;
 - f. The extent to which approval of the proposed zoning map amendment will detrimentally affect nearby property;
 - g. The length of time the subject property has remained vacant as zoned;
 - h. Impact of the proposed development on community facilities and services; and
 - i. The recommendations of staff.

Not all of the criteria must be given equal consideration by the Planning Commission or City Council in reaching a decision.

PLANNING COMMISSION

09 MARCH 2021

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW REPORT

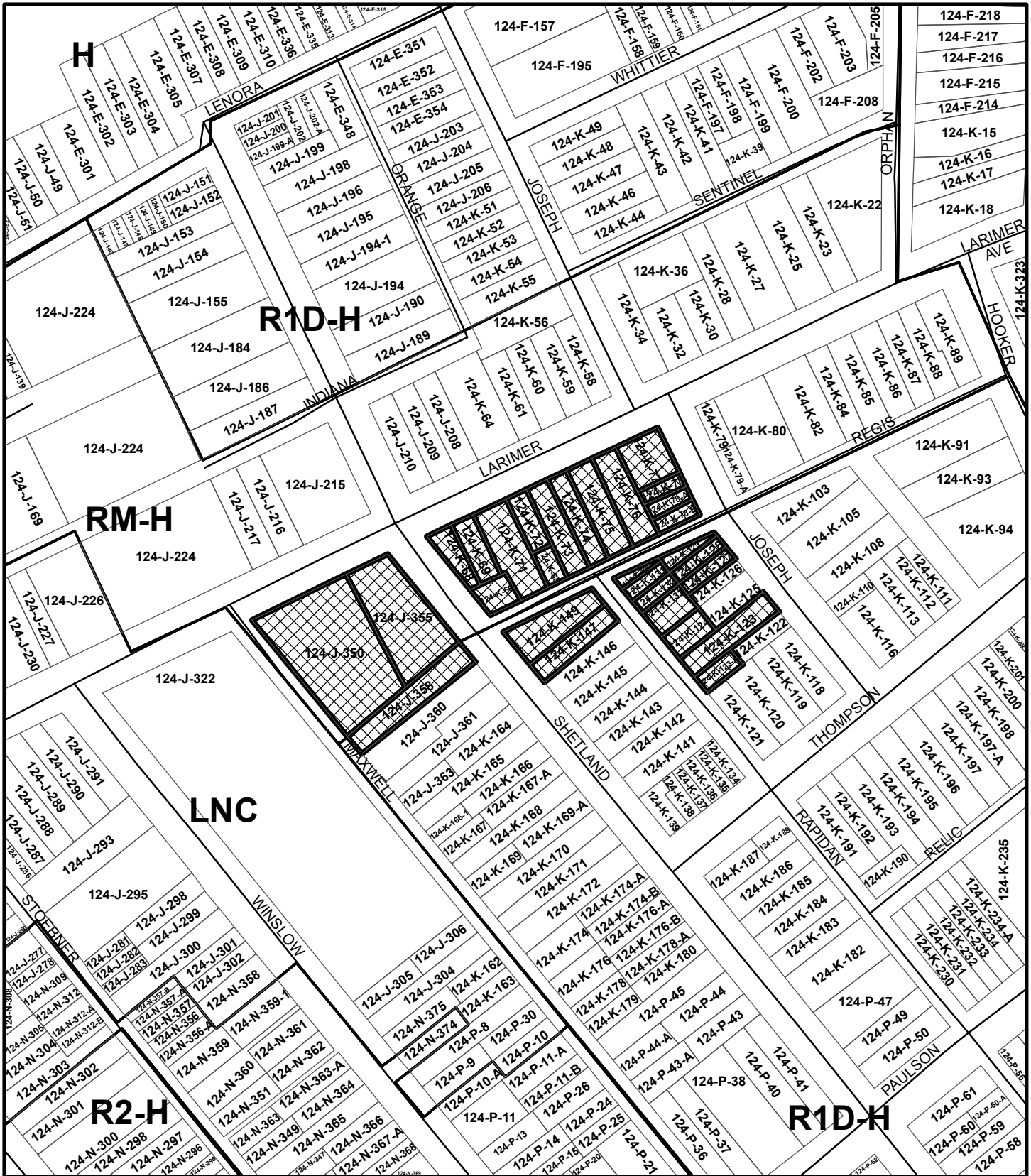
The applicant has submitted written statements of compliance with the above review criteria as an addendum to the application.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

That the Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh **Recommends Approval** to City Council of Zone Change Petition DCP-MPZC-2020-01245 to rezone 29 parcels with frontage on Larimer Avenue, Maxwell Way, Shetland Avenue, Rapidan Way, and Joseph Street owned by the City of Pittsburgh and the Urban Redevelopment Authority from Multi-Unit Residential High Density (RM-H) and Single Unit Detached Residential High Density (R1D-H) to Local Neighborhood Commercial (LNC).

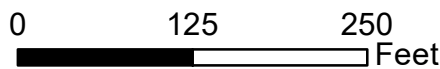
SUBMITTED BY:

Kate Rakus, Land Use Policy and Code Implementation Coordinator



DCP-MPZC-2020-01245 Zoning Map Amendment from Multi-Unit Residential High Density (RM-H) and Single Unit Detached Residential High Density (R1D-H) to Local Neighborhood Commercial (LNC)

-  Streets
-  Project Area
-  Zoning



CITY OF PITTSBURGH
JANUARY 2021

Development Activities Meeting Report (Version: 06/24/2020)

This report created by the Neighborhood Planner and included with staff reports to City Boards and/or Commissions.

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: Steel City Squash Proposed Zone Change (from RM-H and R1D-H to LNC) / 600 block of Larimer Ave	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Larimer Consensus Group Urban Redevelopment Authority
Parcel Number(s): 124-J-350, 124-J-355, 124-J-358, 124-K-65, 124-K-66, 124-K-68, 124-K-69, 124-K-71, 124-K-72, 124-K-73, 124-K-74, 124-K-75, 124-K-76, 124-K-77, 124-K-78, 124-K-78-A, 124-K-78-B, 124-K-123, 124-K-123-A, 124-K-124, 124-K-127, 124-K-128, 124-K-130, 124-K-131, 124-K-132, 124-K-133, 124-K-147, 124-K-149	
ZDR Application Number: DCP-MPZC-2020-01245	
Meeting Location: virtual, via Zoom	
Date: February 3, 2021	
Meeting Start Time: 6:00 PM	
Applicant: Steel City Squash, with GBBN Architects and Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC	Approx. Number of Attendees: 35
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Planning Commission	

How did the meeting inform the community about the development project?

Ex: Community engagement to-date, location and history of the site, demolition needs, building footprint and overall square footage, uses and activities (particularly on the ground floor), transportation needs and parking proposed, building materials, design, and other aesthetic elements of the project, community uses, amenities and programs.

- The Steel City Squash project team was represented at the meeting by board member Lafe Metz of Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC, Executive Director Brad Young, and GBBN Architects' Anne Chen and Melanie Ngami.
- Community engagement has included a number of meetings with the Larimer Consensus Group dating back to a year ago, and the project has the support of that group.
- The URA began exclusive negotiations to sell 26 of the 28 parcels included in the rezoning (totaling just a little under 1 acre) to Steel City Squash back in August 2020.
- The project is focused on fundraising right now and on beginning design work with the architects. GBBN was recently selected amidst a competitive search for an architectural firm.
- Due diligence of the project site is also ongoing, including some survey work, an environmental site assessment (as the site was once home to a dry cleaner and an auto body shop), and some geotechnical work (as there were once buildings on the site that were demolished with materials left in place and buried), with completion of these items anticipated this month.
- The site is proposed to be rezoned because the current residential zoning (RM-H for the building, with some R1D-H for the proposed parking area) does not permit the Indoor Recreational Use. The applicant will be seeking to change the zoning of the parcels to LNC for two reasons:
 - 1) The Larimer Ave corridor is already zoned LNC from Maxwell Way (one block south of the project site) down to East Liberty Blvd;

- 2) The LNC district permits all of the same residential uses that are present in the vicinity today, so in the even the project does not go forward, it would not be detrimental to the redevelopment of the site.
- Two of the parcels included in the rezoning, 124-J-350 and 124-J-355, will not be owned by Steel City Squash and will remain under the ownership of the City. However, they are included in the application to provide a continuous LNC district. L. Metz explained that this was best practice and that the City did not like to have “islands” of discontinuous zoning.
- The project team has received a significant amount of feedback to date from the Larimer Consensus Group and residents about the proposed parking lot at the rear of the property (which will be achieved through the vacation of portions of Regis Way and Rapidan Way). The goal of these discussions was to ensure that the parking lot would not be disruptive to neighbors. The team also met with the homeowner at 6312 Joseph St to discuss the project and parking lot.
- L. Metz explained that this Development Activities Meeting was the final step prior to presenting before the Planning Commission. He stated that there would be a Planning Commission briefing for the proposed rezoning on February 23, with action taking place at the March 9 hearing. If the Planning Commission recommends approval, an ordinance will be presented to City Council to change the zoning map.
- Aside from the rezoning focus of the presentation, the project team also presented on the building and on the Steel City Squash organization itself:
 - A very preliminary conceptual site plan was shown, just for a rough scale of what is to be expected of the project and the locations of the amenities (squash courts, locker rooms, classrooms, parking, etc.). The site plan was from earlier work on the project and was not produced by the current architect GBBN.
 - Some preliminary sketches and renderings were also shown to provide a preview of the interior of the facility, including classrooms, study areas, common areas, and the squash courts.
 - A. Chen discussed GBBN’s work on other educational facilities (including libraries) and on the firm’s philosophy in terms of the built environment and sustainability.
 - M. Ngami mentioned that she lived near the project site and was excited to be on the design team.
 - B. Young discussed the nature of the Steel City Squash program, explaining that it was an out-of-school academic and athletic enrichment program drawing from Pittsburgh Public Schools and other districts. The program involves tutoring and college preparation along with mentoring activities and works with students all the way through university and career obtainment. The program is centered around the sport of squash and is part of a national and international squash network located in other economically disadvantaged communities. 94% of the students in the program move on to post-secondary education, with 64% completing their bachelor’s degrees. The program works with students to provide internship and career opportunities as well as summer school and travel opportunities. Services are free of charge to participants and are fully funded as long as students and their families commit to the program. The Pittsburgh group recently won a Squash in Education national championship in its division.
 - The organization is looking to expand the programming to Larimer youth. It has been serving 64 students consistently at the University of Pittsburgh squash courts but believes that it can double its enrollment in the program with the new facility. The organization would like to expand to a greater population, be more geographically focused, and provide a place for the students to play squash on the weekends when the Pitt courts have not been available. It would also like to have members of the community learn the sport of squash and to have access to other health and fitness activities. Going forward, the organization will be partnering with Chatham University. The Chatham squash team will practice at the facility, and Chatham students will tutor the youth and serve as coaches as well.
 - The organization recently received a \$500,000 grant from the Commonwealth’s Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) in support of the Larimer project.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
There were no questions or comments from attendees.	

Other Notes

Text

Planner completing report: Phillip Wu



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January 21, 2021

VIA EMAIL AND UPS

City of Pittsburgh Planning Commission
200 Ross St., 3rd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

**Re: Steel City Squash Rezoning Request
DCP-MPZC-2020-01245
Statement of Compliance with Zoning Criteria**

Dear Planning Commission Members:

On behalf of Steel City Squash, enclosed please find the Statement of Compliance with Zoning Criteria for the above-referenced zone map change request.

Steel City Squash is a Pennsylvania non-profit corporation and 501(c)(3) entity that provides after-school educational support and athletic opportunities to inner-city school children in the City of Pittsburgh ("City"). Steel City Squash provides life-changing opportunities to Pittsburgh youth who desire and deserve more, to prepare for and graduate from college, through education, mentoring, community service, travel and the sport of squash. Steel City Squash's mission is to provide consistent, long-term and reliable support to students and their families, to help minority children reach their full potential in the classroom, community and on the squash court. Although squash is the sport around which the program is centered, the main purpose of the program has always been to provide one-on-one academic support to the City's inner-city students.

In furtherance of its mission, Steel City Squash has proposed a new state-of-the-art academic and athletic facility to be located in the City's Larimer neighborhood. The proposal requires the rezoning and redevelopment of approximately 29 long-vacant parcels on Larimer Avenue, the principal thoroughfare in Larimer. The land is currently located in the City's R1D-H (Single-Unit Detached Residential High Density) and RM-H (Multi-Unit Residential High Density) zoning districts. In order to allow for the proposed use, which the City has determined is a "Recreation and Entertainment, Indoor (General)" use, Steel City Squash has proposed to amend the property's zoning classification to an LNC (Local Neighborhood Commercial) zoning district.

City of Pittsburgh Planning Commission
January 21, 2021
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Steel City Squash believes rezoning the property to allow for the development of its community-based academic and squash facility will benefit the Larimer community for generations to come. Accordingly, Steel City Squash respectfully requests that the Planning Commission issue a favorable recommendation to City Council for the requested zone map change.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information.

Very truly yours,


B. Lafe Metz

Enclosure

**Zone Map Change Application under City of Pittsburgh
Zoning Code Section 922.05**

DCP-MPZC-2020-01245

**STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE
WITH ZONING CODE CRITERIA**

Pittsburgh Zoning Code Section 922.05.F sets out the specific criteria to be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council when allowing a Zoning Map Amendment pursuant to Code Section 922.05.B.2. The text of Code Section 922.05.F and statements of compliance for this application are set forth below:

922.05.F Review Criteria

The criteria for review of a proposed amendment to the Zoning District Map or the text of the Zoning Code are set out in this section. Not all of the criteria must be given equal consideration by the Planning Commission or City Council in reaching a decision. The criteria to be considered shall be as follows:

- 1. The consistency of the proposal with adopted plans and policies of the City;**

Steel City Squash (“Applicant”) has proposed the rezoning of 29 vacant parcels of land (“Property”) currently owned by the City of Pittsburgh (“City”) in order to allow for the construction of a new community-based academic and athletic center (“Facility”). The Facility will primarily serve as educational space for Applicant’s academic support program, and will also include new squash courts, spectator areas and fitness facilities. Pursuant to Section 911.02 of the Code, the City has determined that the proposed use is a “Recreation and Entertainment, Indoor (General)” use. Therefore, Applicant has proposed to rezone the property from RID-H (Single-Unit Detached Residential High Density) and RM-H (Multi-Unit Residential High Density) to LNC (Local Neighborhood Commercial), where “Recreation and Entertainment, Indoor (General)” uses are permitted by right.

The rezoning of the Property is consistent with the 2010 Larimer Vision Plan, which was adopted in 2010 by the Larimer Consensus Group in partnership with various other City stakeholders. The Property is located in an area identified in the plan for potential future recreational facilities. The Larimer Vision Plan specifically addresses the need for recreational uses similar to the Facility:

“There is unmet demand for additional active recreation facilities in Pittsburgh including playing fields for baseball, softball, football, and

soccer. Other facilities for active youth and adult sports are also needed; existing facilities are fully used and even over-used.”

See Larimer Vision Plan, at pg. 27.

“Larimer needs to find large scale land uses for its vacant land. Opportunities exist for active recreation, urban farming and park uses. The market analysis report suggests an active recreation complex, including rectangular fields, and a fieldhouse or other indoor facilities will create a city-wide and regional destination that could be self-sustaining.”

See Larimer Vision Plan, at pg. 31.

Therefore, the proposed rezoning is consistent with the adopted plans and policies of the City.

2. The convenience and welfare of the public;

The zone change request will positively affect the convenience and welfare of the public by allowing for educational uses that include athletic facilities. Rezoning the Property to LNC – Local Neighborhood Commercial will provide more flexibility in permitted uses, allowing for the redevelopment of 29 lots that have sat vacant and contributed to urban blight for many years.

3. The intent and purpose of this Zoning Code;

Section 901.03 identifies the purposes and intent of the Zoning Code, which are:

a) Facilitate development of good quality;

The requested zone map change will allow vacant and blighted land to be redeveloped for a broader array of high quality educational, recreational and community-based uses, such as the proposed Facility.

b) Spur reinvestment in the existing building stock;

The redevelopment of vacant parcels should be a catalyst for the redevelopment of other vacant parcels and spark investment in existing housing stock in the Larimer neighborhood.

c) Recognize and preserve the uniqueness of Pittsburgh, including its natural and human-made environment;

Steel City Squash has chosen the Property as the location for the proposed Facility because it recognizes the unique potential and inherent value of the Larimer neighborhood. Furthermore, the redevelopment of the Facility for educational and recreational uses is consistent with the community's vision for the area.

d) Maintain and strengthen the City's neighborhoods;

The purpose of the zone map change allowing for development of the Facility is to invest in the future of the Larimer neighborhood by creating a community academic and recreation area that will be inclusive and beneficial to all Larimer residents. During its meetings with Larimer Consensus Group, Applicant has committed to prioritizing the use of the facility for Larimer residents over those who reside outside the neighborhood.

e) Ensure appropriate opportunities for participation and involvement by all affected parties;

As Steel City Squash has explored the proposed Facility in Larimer, its representatives have been in consistent communication with the Larimer Consensus Group, attended meetings of its Housing and Land Use Committee and presented the project to the community at an open public meeting. Steel City Squash has also presented the project and received encouragement and support from the following elected officials and stakeholders: County Chief Executive Rich Fitzgerald, City of Pittsburgh Mayor's Chief of Staff Dan Gilman, Sen. Lindsey Williams, Sen. Jay Costa, Rep. Ed Gainey, and various staff members at the City of Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority. Steel City Squash has scheduled the required RCO meeting with Larimer Consensus Group for February 4, 2020.

f) Control the impacts associated with land uses;

The zone map change proposes to extend the existing LNC district, not to impose a new zoning district (and associated uses) on the Larimer neighborhood.

g) Ensure predictability and consistency in the land development process for neighborhood, business and development interests;

The zone change and proposed Facility are consistent with the Larimer Vision Plan. As the zone change would merely extend an

already existing LNC district, the land development process will be predictable and consistent with current practices.

h) Preserve and enhance the Public Realm; and

The zone change and proposed Facility will complement the recreational open green space and park, which are envisioned for the area north of Larimer Avenue. The Facility includes a new architecturally pleasing design, as well as landscaping and additional street trees, which will enhance the Public Realm.

i) Facilitate administration and enforcement of the City regulations.

No changes to the administration and enforcement of City regulations are proposed.

4. Compatibility of the proposal with the zoning, uses and character of the neighborhood;

As noted above, the rezoning of the Property is consistent with the 2010 Larimer Vision Plan, which was adopted in 2010 by the Larimer Consensus Group in partnership with various City stakeholders. The Property is located in an area identified in the plan for potential future recreational facilities. The Larimer Vision Plan specifically addresses the need for recreational uses similar to the Facility:

“There is unmet demand for additional active recreation facilities in Pittsburgh including playing fields for baseball, softball, football, and soccer. Other facilities for active youth and adult sports are also needed; existing facilities are fully used and even over-used.”

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“Larimer needs to find large scale land uses for its vacant land. Opportunities exist for active recreation, urban farming and park uses. The market analysis report suggests an active recreation complex, including rectangular fields, and a fieldhouse or other indoor facilities will create a city-wide and regional destination that could be self-sustaining.”

See Larimer Vision Plan, at pg. 31.

Therefore, the proposed rezoning and Facility are compatible with the community’s vision for the surrounding neighborhood.

5. The suitability of the subject property for the uses to which it has been restricted without the proposed zoning map amendment;

“Parks and Recreation (General) uses,” which provide for spectator seating and/or more than 19 parking spaces, are not permitted in the RID-H and RM-H zoning districts. However, “Parks and Recreation (Limited) uses,” which do not provide for spectator seating and have less than 20 parking spaces are permitted in the RID-H and RM-H zoning districts. Consequently, “Parks and Recreation” uses are generally consistent with the existing permitted uses. The proposed Facility is a “Parks and Recreation” use, but will likely contain more than 19 parking spaces and there will be limited indoor spectator seating. Therefore, the Property is suitable to be rezoned for the proposed use because “Parks and Recreation” are already permitted on the Property.

6. The extent to which approval of the proposed zoning map amendment will detrimentally affect nearby property;

It is anticipated that the zone map amendment will be beneficial to nearby properties by allowing for a community-based high quality development to replace vacant land that has been blighted for many years.

7. The length of time the subject property has remained vacant as zoned;

The exact length of time the properties has been vacant is unknown, but it has been at least ten years.

8. Impact of the proposed development on community facilities and services; and

The proposed Facility will include several large classrooms for use in Applicant’s educational program, which will be available to Larimer residents for a variety of community-based events when not being utilized for academics.

9. The recommendations of staff.

Steel City Squash has been engaged with City Planning staff throughout the development process and anticipates a positive recommendation for this zone map change request.