



September 8, 2023

Via Email:

zoningboard@pittsburghpa.gov
The City of Pittsburgh Zoning Board of Adjustment
200 Ross St.
Robbins Building
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
RE: DCP-ZDR-2022-07239

Dear Members of the Board:

I am writing in my official capacity as Chair of Board of Trustees for Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Inc. (“Phipps”). If the Zoning Board of Adjustment were to deny the zoning use variance requested by Craft General for the Irish Centre property located at 6886 Forward Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15217, Phipps is interested in purchasing the property for a mutually agreed upon price.

Phipps would use the property as the headquarters for its Homegrown program. The Homegrown program improves the overall health of families and children in underserved neighborhoods by providing fresh produce and installing raised-bed vegetable gardens at households. A description of the program from our website is attached.

We do not foresee a need for a zoning variance because the property is zoned for community buildings and agricultural purposes. As noted, Phipps would use the site for community purposes and agricultural purposes. Therefore, the site would be occupied by Phipps for a permitted use.

By contrast, Craft General plans to build a multi-unit residential building that well exceeds the current zoning specifications. The plan provides for a building that is eighty-seven (87) feet in height, over double the current height restriction of forty (40) feet. Moreover, the plan is not consistent with the current character of Frick Park.

Frick Park is connected to Nine-mile Run. Nine-mile Run is part of a watershed that drains over six miles of Wilkinsburg, Edgewood, Swissvale, Forest Hills, Squirrel Hill, and Point Breeze. The proposed plan by Craft General will potentially impact Nine Mile Run, reversing the three-year long restoration that the City of Pittsburgh, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Environmental Protection Agency invested into restoring the ecosystem to its form prior to urban development. The \$7,700,000 project provided floodwater catching areas, rain barrels to individual

Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens

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homes, and fixed underlying sewers. Furthermore, the proposed plan will potentially impact the network of walking trails.

A memorandum further detailing Phipps' intended use of the Irish Centre and the benefits of Phipps occupying the property is enclosed.

Please let me know if any additional information is needed in advance.

Very truly yours,

Erica Cochran Hameen
Chair of Board of Trustees

Enclosures

CC:

James Carroll , Esq.
Tricia Henning, Esq.
Martha Isler, President of Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition
Michael Hiller, Executive Director of UpstreamPgh
Frick Park Friends, Christina Cerkevich
Raymond N. Baum, Esq.