

Boulevard One Design Review Committee
June 17, 2021
Video/Audio E-Conference

Attendees:

Committee: Jamie Fogle, Monty Force, Steve Lane, Carla McConnell, Kevin Yoshida
MoonStar: Scott Axelrod
Public: Lauren Bloomquist

Clarifications to these minutes as submitted by Carla McConnell and approved by the DRC are seen in red on pages 3 and 4.

- **MoonStar**
Rowhomes (Oneida Ct/Lowry Blvd)
Parking Variance Hearing

Introduction:

The chair, Monty Force gave an introduction and background to the current variance request. This parcel of land known as Block 6 had always been noted in the master plan for commercial use and a desire for a buffer/transition from the commercial to the residential developments. For several years there have been discussions with MoonStar for the development of the buffer zone. However, planning could not proceed until the commercial tenant was selected. Configuration of the site has now been determined with Clark's Market as the commercial entity.

There were two items that the LRA asked of MoonStar in their planning:

- 1) A size of units and price point to fill a residential product gap within the Boulevard One community
- 2) Hold a hard corner at Lowry Blvd/Oneida Ct.

MoonStar's plan fulfills those two mandates using an L-shape design for the corner and through use of smaller units. Of the eleven units, eight would have 2-car garages and three would have 1-car garages, thus leading to the variance request being heard today. They do meet the CCD requirement of .75 spaces per unit, but do not meet the Boulevard One Design Guidelines standard of two/unit.

Applicant Presentation:

Scott Axelrod, principal of MoonStar, showed the site plan consisting of two buildings. The building along Oneida Ct has five units, all with 2-car garages. The other L-shaped building wraps the corner. The three units forming the L corner would have 1-car garages with the remaining three units on Lowry Blvd having 2-car garages.

Mr. Axelrod said he has used this same configuration at several locations around Denver and it has been accepted by the market and gained CCD approval for planning principles. Most of the units are approximately 1500 SF with two bedrooms.

Previous buyers have typically been young singles or couples. In a prior project six of eleven units were purchased by singles and the other five units were purchased by couples. Of those, even the couples had only 1 car, which seems to be prevalent of this market niche. Under CCD zoning code the parking requirement is .75/unit or 8 spaces with 19 spaces being provided. Boulevard One guidelines would require 22 spaces.

Questions from the Committee:

Kevin – Describe the story and bedroom count. **The corner units are 2 ½ stories with two bedrooms. (1/2 story is less than 50% of the floor area of the floor below). Units on either side of the corner unit step up to three levels.**

Monty – Is there street parking on Oneida Ct and Lowry Blvd? **Yes, there is, on both.** Is there guest parking on site? **No, and none is required by code. These are market rate for-sale units.**

Steve – Number of street spaces? Monty said, using the scale of site plan drawing as a rough guess, there would be 6-7 on Oneida and 2-3 on Lowry Blvd right in front of this development. Monty pointed out that there are single-family homes fronting the central park that are alley-loaded so no driveway that could be used for visitors. Visitor parking for them would be on either Oneida Ct or Oneida St.

Carla – Understand there is a development balance of land cost, return on the investment and market desires. Would it be feasibly possible to lose a unit to create the 2-car garages for the remaining deficient units? Monty said that the land cost is typically a percentage of the anticipated home price. The land cost basically serves as a recapture of infrastructure costs incurred by the LRA. It is not geared to each parcel, but on an overall basis of development of the entire Boulevard One site. The LRA asked Scott to realistically configure and fit what he could on the site. If he is asked to remove any units there would need to be a proportionate reduction in the cost of the land. **His opinion is that a good design is better than having parking or unobstructed views to Clark's wall between the buildings, which would lessen the desired buffer. His goal is to meet a price point not yet available. Healthy vibrant communities can offer various price points.** Is there a compromise of extending Unit 10 on the north end of the L building into the area between the buildings to allow for a two garage spaces? **There might be side setback and fire code separation codes to be verified.**

Public Comments:

Lauren Bloomquist said she had called and spoke with Jean to clarify the plans and is not a resident who received the notice. She does have concerns about the parking and gave an example of cars from the apartments ringing the park. There are limited transportation options in the area, and she is not convinced that buyers would have only one car.

Monty commented that it is interesting that the Boulevard One Design Review parking requirement for the apartments was met and more than City requirements, yet apartment dwellers are choosing to street park despite sufficient parking. Carla added that this scenario is happening all over the city **and is the result of tenants having to pay extra for parking.**

Monty asked Scott if there are any restraints on renting by the owner. **Under fair housing there can be no restrictions. However, in his experience he does not typically have investor buyers.**

Monty summarized comments emailed from Michelle Wiseman. She lives in one of the homes facing the central park and her visitors do park on Oneida Ct. These eleven units will only add to the density and parking demands will traffic on Lowry Blvd will only get worse. As retail opens our parking will become more difficult and will necessitate residential parking passes. Disagree that it is typical for buyers with only one car, and no one has .75 car. Public transportation requires user to walk to either Monaco or Quebec. She is opposed to the variance request.

Discussion by the Committee:

Monty – to be specific on the request: 19 spaces are being provided for 11 units at 1.7 spaces per unit with 22 required at 2 per unit. He asks for further discussion from the committee.

Kevin – Need to go over the procedural standards for granting or denying a variance request.

- A. Written request and notice of the hearing to adjacent properties.
- B. Strict application of the requirement would be impossible, unduly harsh, or unnecessary of either:
 - 1. Physical conditions or restraints such as topography, natural obstructions or aesthetic or environmental considerations
 - 2. Economic or unjustified economic hardship to the Applicant
 - 3. Although not meeting the requirement, the proposal advances the intent of the Design Guidelines.
- C. The variance would not unreasonably burden other property within the Boulevard One community or an adjacent property.
- D. The variance granted is the minimum possible to alleviate the physical condition or hardship.
- E. The variance requested is not the result of or made necessary by the actions or activities Applicant.

Kevin – The items that he sees as important for consideration are the L-shape condition limiting the opportunity for 2-car garages in the corner, but necessary to maintain the hard corner, providing multiple price points and the general walkability of the community, and the screenings between the buildings. The geometry of the site at the corner directly impacts the ability to provide 2-car spaces for the three units in the corner. It would be different if the request were for 30 units.

Carla – Pedestrian and design goals are met. She agrees that public transportation is lacking, and she can relate to the concerns presented by Lauren and Michelle.

Monty – Focusing on this project of 3 units out of 11 and in the broader 750 residential units site-wide does not seem to be burdensome. Clark’s is planned to have adequate parking on-site as well as shared parking on Block 7 to the east. Would not expect any exacerbation from Clark’s to any parking issue on Oneida Ct.

Carla – Development of the restaurant on the park could add to any parking issue and there is the situation that arose with East Park.

Steve – Do not see MoonStar as being a major issue. He is more concerned about the street parking from the apartments when a parking structure with plenty of parking is provided.

Carla – She sees alternative options for the project with either a reduction of one housing unit or expanding one garage space into the area between the buildings.

Kevin – Need to reconcile issues that arise in this point in time.

Carla - Consideration for mitigation of ongoing or existing conditions is also appropriate.

Monty – In his opinion guest parking on site is not a requirement. Comparison to the apartment parking concern with 350 units and comparison to East Park resulting from a conversion of 200 condominium units to a rental complex is not the same as 11 units of for-sale housing and 3 parking spaces.

Steve – Has there been any push back when potential buyers are told there is a 1-car garage? **Scott said he was quite nervous with the launch of this L design concept on Vine between 18th and 19th St but saw the benefits of the design. To his surprise, there was no push back. With the latest development there was one lost sale because the last unit available was a 1-car garage and the couple did have two cars. His development in Westminster has six L building for a total of 80 units. Again, the design benefits convinced him to move forward with the project. He would not have been comfortable with that size project if there had been a lot of negative responses to some 1-car garages. Scott said that he tries hard to look at reality and not just how he thinks a project will turn out. He has been quite pleased with the outcome of this intelligent design. In his opinion a few 1-car garages are better than 2-car garages in slot home designs. He has received very positive reaction and the homes are selling.**

Kevin – Product selling is a good factor, but the committee also must filter community input. In general, street parking is good for the community to act as friction to slow down traffic, separation for pedestrians from traffic, etc. In his opinion a variance for three parking spaces is not unreasonable.

Jamie – All of Lowry, including Boulevard One has purposely planned walkability and as the development completes that friction will take place to slow the traffic on Lowry Blvd. His experience with friends is that there is a lot of use of alternative or multimodal transportation. His opinion is that this is not a major issue with only three parking spaces and no other parking variance requests within Boulevard One.

Monty explained the options for action:

1. Table or delay for further information at a future hearing

2. Motion for approval
3. Motion for approval with restrictions
4. Motion for denial

A motion by Steve Lane for approval was made.

Carla asked to amend the motion to see if the expansion of Unit 10 into the space between the buildings would be possible. Scott said that he is 95% sure there would be setback and fire separation restrictions preventing that expansion. Monty interjected that it could cause procedural difficulties with a second hearing and delays for the study. However, a study could be requested.

The original motion, without the amendment, was seconded by Kevin Yoshida and passed unanimously.

The applicant was asked to provide the committee with information on impacts of expanding the unit footprint to add a 2nd parking stall.

- **Adjournment**

The hearing was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

Editor's Note – A sketch was provided to the committee on June 21 along with a letter of explanation citing the problems encountered with extending a garage for Unit 10 into the space between the buildings. The committee agreed, by emails, that this solution would not be required.