

Manayunk Neighborhood Council, PO Box 4667, Philadelphia, PA 19127

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August 10 2007

Philadelphia Historical Commission
576 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: 1 Leverington Avenue-Venice One
OPPOSED

Dear Commission,

Manayunk and Philadelphia deserve better buildings in both scale and design. This development is significantly flawed. Recent developments in Conshohocken and East Falls set a much higher standard.

Manayunk Neighborhood Council feels the proposed development is deficient in many ways. The proposed scale dwarfs anything else in Manayunk. The stacked box/tenement style of the buildings represents nothing historic or modern in Manayunk or in Philadelphia. The lack of architectural detail and the featureless cladding system combine to create a monotonous building (Exhibit 1). The development will dominate the northern entrance to Manayunk currently dominated by the famous railroad bridge (Exhibit 2). The development overcrowds the land and provides no amenities for it's residents, Manayunk residents, or recreational users on the river, canal or towpath.

The following is a more detailed list of deficiencies.

- Everything about this development shows that the goal is to create low cost housing at the highest possible density. The height is limited just short of a "high-rise". The number of units is limited by the available parking (stacked parking is used to extend the number of units. These units (2/3's one bedroom, 600 SF) will be best suited as a dorm for area schools.
- Building will create a major impact on Manayunk. The buildings will dominate all views of the northern entrance to Main Street (Exhibit 2). The expanse of buildings is over 1000 feet long and is 90 feet (89) high. The guard rail of the Green Lane Bridge is only 25 feet above the island (from direct measurement). The buildings will tower 64 feet over the bridge and 10 feet over the famous railroad bridge. The bridge is a proud and famous landmark of Manayunk and is featured in the logos and on the web pages of Manayunk Neighborhood Council and Manayunk Development Corporation.
- The design is lacking in character and architectural importance. The building design and cladding material will create large flat surfaces. See renderings on pages 15 and 16 of the developer's 11x17 presentation packet (Exhibit 3).

- This development (at 89 feet) will tower over the adjacent 60 foot Venice Lofts development.
- Traditional 4 and 5 story mill buildings were only 50-60 feet tall. Dan Neducsin's Chimney Hill development on Leverington, a short distance up the hill from this development, is a good example.
- Buildings of this scale and scope should provide a connection to the historic mills of Manayunk or the riverfront.
- Whether or not it's included in their calculations, their drawings misrepresent their green space. They show the existing and functioning railroad as green space. They show the canal tow path (part of Fairmount Park) as green space (pages 4, 5, 6 and 10 of the developers 11x17 presentation packet) (Exhibit 4) . They neither own nor control either parcel. The railroad tracks and right of way are gravel and certainly not "green".
- Their perspective view of the development from the expressway is misleading (page 16 of the developer's presentation packet; Exhibit 5). They show a view looking down on the buildings when in fact the expressway will be at about the third floor level. The buildings are higher than the railroad bridge, the expressway goes under the bridge.
- The buildings will be constructed out of state and only assembled on site. While this is not a historic consideration, it is our experience that a project's contribution to the building trades is often considered. This project is designed to minimize the contribution to the Philadelphia building trades and therefore deserves no special consideration.
- To approve this project would be to capriciously disregard the Manayunk Historic District ordinance and Manayunk History.

Thank You,



Kevin Smith
President

Cc: Councilwoman Carol Campbell

Exhibit 1



Cladding System--Italian Walnut
<http://www.trespa.com>



Office Building in the Netherlands
From Trespa web page

Exhibit 2

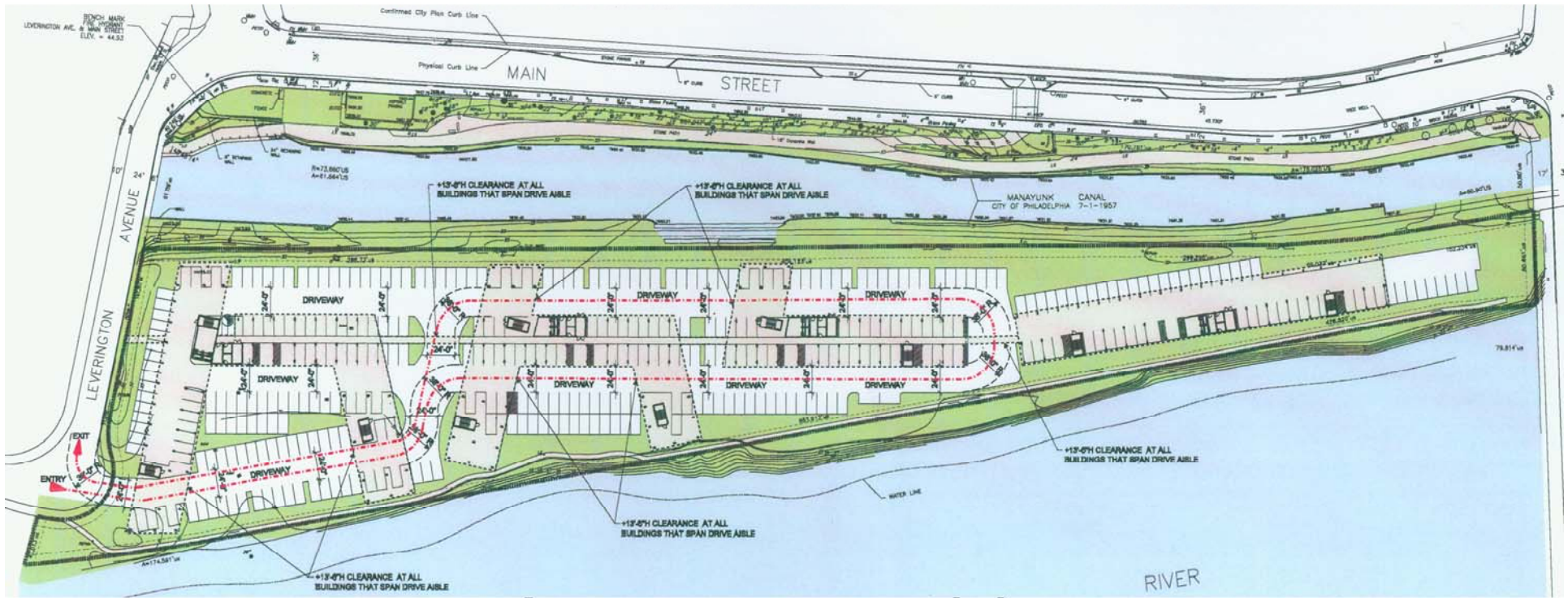


**Approximate view of development
From Green Lane Entrance to Manayunk**

Exhibit 3



Exhibit 4



Developers Green Space Depiction



Actual Development Property and Potential Green Space

Exhibit 5

